HIND BOOKS
SRINAGAR

TO THE READER

KINDLY use this book very carefully. If the book is disfigured or marked or written on while in your possession the book will have to be replaced by a new copy or paid for. In case the book be a volume of set of which single volumes are not available the price of the whole set will be realized.

Checked
31

AMARSINGH COLLEGE

LIGHT MORE LIGHT
A.S. COLLEGE

Checked

Library

Class No. F 823

Book No. A66T

Acc. No. 8881

THE
THIRTEENTH MOVE

By the same author

[illegible]

Com.05
AL-88
6

THE THIRTEENTH MOVE

BY

GODFREY ARCHARD

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON

FIRST PUBLISHED . . . 1940

Made and Printed in Great Britain for
Hodder and Stoughton Limited by
Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ltd., London and Aylesbury

TO

STELLA

AMAR SINGH COLLEGE.
ACC No. 8881
LIBRARY, SRINAGAR.

F
Abb T

PROLOGUE

The reporter stood at the window of the dingy coffee room and looked across the Station Square. On the wall opposite he could see a week-old poster advertising a rally of the Friends of Peace, a knot of strikers stood below him on the pavement, and the sky that should have glowed crimson from the furnaces of the steel works was lit only by pale street lamps.

" So this is a strike," said the reporter softly.

At the Town Hall, he knew, the employers were talking fruitlessly with trade-union representatives who had lost all vestige of control. Over their heads hung the spectre of official intervention, and they could do nothing. The reporter turned back into the room.

" This place gives me the jumps."

His companion, an older man, drained his tankard and took up the other's first remark.

" It isn't a strike," he answered. " It's something different. Haven't you seen the men who are talking to the strikers ? "

He pulled out his pipe. " You have strikes where the men have a genuine grievance and the unions are fighting on a clear-cut issue, you have strikes engineered by a gang of agitators who have played the same game over and over again in a dozen different industries, and you have this. No real grievance, no professional agitators, and the Lord knows why it's started or what will be the end."

Outside, men stood in sullen knots against the walls while organisers passed from group to group—young men in sports coats and flannel trousers; girls with short hair who wore tweed skirts and low-heeled shoes. It was they who had begun this strike, and still they talked in whispers that died down for a moment when the police paced slowly by in patrolling couples.

A small disturbance about almost nothing, and one that could have been avoided as easily as could a dozen others during the last few months.

The young reporter shivered. " What about our rearmament ? " he asked.

" It's held up. Strikes here and in other places, the building of militia camps slowed down. The democracies will have to fight for their lives soon, and we are handicapping ourselves before we start," answered his companion.

The owners and the trade officials talked on fruitlessly. The blast furnaces were cold, the strike organisers moved tirelessly on their mission.

. . . And in France it had been worse. Only the totalitarian states went on relentlessly, and their workers dared not stop.

The factory in Bavaria was busy day and night. It stood on its bleak hilltop with rows of reinforced-concrete machine sheds huddled inside a wall, and you walked towards it from the small town in the valley until you reached the barbed-wire entanglement, with its guard of soldiers that kept the local inhabitants from guessing what went on inside. Some said it was really a concentration camp; others, and they the wisest, whispered that the Führer did not wish them to know and that they were not curious. And every night lorries thundered through the barrier after the guards had examined the drivers' documents, while the men who worked behind those concrete walls kept to their own new housing estate and seldom visited the little town, or the inn that was not so hospitable as it had been when guns were less important and butter was allowed.

In his laboratory, Professor Hans Schiedemann stepped back from his work bench and went to the desk that stood in one corner. An electric furnace was on the far side of the room beside a fume chamber, the test tubes and crucible with which he had been working still stood on the bench. For he was experimenting with metals; and if he, Schiedemann, could accomplish all that he hoped . . .

A telephone bell trilled in the next room, and the professor put down the pencil he had just picked up and frowned. He stripped off his white overall, for he was a man who could not be lightly disturbed from his routine, crossed to the basin and methodically washed his hands, and at last went into the other room and picked up the receiver of the telephone.

" Hans Schiedemann," he said.

His voice held a note of irritation. " What is it now ? I am in the middle of an experiment, and left instructions that I must not be disturbed."

" The Geschäftsführer wishes to speak to you," answered a voice thinly over the wire, and as it was followed by his superior's tones the professor stiffened as if on parade.

" Professor Schiedemann ? I regret, my dear Hans, that it will be necessary for you to vacate your laboratories in the Administrative Building by the second of next month, and preparations have been speeded up for housing you elsewhere."

" The second of August ? But it is impossible ! " protested Schiedemann. He took a deep breath.

"The thirtieth, as you told me before, I could have managed; but to put it forward nearly a month——"

"It is an order."

There was a steely ring in the voice at the other end, and as the line went dead with a click Professor Hans Schiedemann, all protest taken from him, replaced the receiver and went heavily back to his laboratory.

He had received his instructions, and, from the man who had given them to him, it was enough.

The King of Poland slobbered a little into the straw that made his bed. He stirred, and heard the cattle on the far side of the partition moving too, as the little Polish village near Poznan awoke to a fresh day's work. He had been beaten the night before; beaten because he had tried to take lawful tribute; and the men who insisted on calling him Stanislaw Barcikowski, when they had no more disreputable epithet for him, had declared that he was stealing from the village store.

It was all a plot. They said that he was mad, but Stanislaw knew better. Royal blood flowed in his veins, royal thought filled his mind . . . and as he remembered breakfast the King of Poland scratched himself and went into the yard where flies buzzed about the midden. The woman who called herself his aunt would give him a crust in return for the tasks his huge, shambling frame and tireless muscles did so easily.

He remembered very little, now, of the days before he had been king. Only his aunt knew that he had been orphaned in 1920 in the fight against the Ukrainians at Lwow. The child of three had been adopted by a major in the lancers, who shortly returned to civil life as Professor Cegielski of the University of Wilno, and the incongruous couple had lived with an incredibly aged housekeeper until the professor died of pneumonia when his ward was twelve.

Somehow Professor Cegielski had known of the aunt near Poznan, and the boy had gone to her—a handsome lad who talked so learnedly of history that he might have been a professor himself. Then he had ventured into the stall with the bull while nobody was near to rescue him, and when at last they knew he would not die there was nothing left save a damaged brain in a body that ran enormously to muscle. He had not proved violent, but that was all.

Stanislaw wandered along the track that was the only road in the village, and hummed a little tune. He liked the warmth of the sun upon him, and as a closed car drew up beside him he looked round with a smile.

"Get inside," commanded the man who was driving.

Stanislaw cowered into the ditch. He did not know these people, and many kicks had led him to distrust strangers almost as much as the villagers with whom he lived.

"I've done nothing wrong," he whimpered.

The man in the back of the car grunted impatiently, and his companion caught him by the arm. He descended into the muddy roadway and bowed, cap in hand to display a head with the hair clipped so that the skin showed pinkly through.

"If you will come with us, Your Majesty," he said, "we have your breakfast waiting for you."

He spoke in German, but in his village Stanislaw had picked up the language so that it was his second tongue. He began to realise that dreams might sometimes come true.

"I can eat as much as I like?" he asked.

"As much as you like, Your Majesty," replied the man from the car gravely.

There was nobody in sight, and Stanislaw Barcikowski gave way to temptation.

"I'll come with you," said the man who thought that he was King of Poland, and got clumsily into the car.

Roman Baczewski was not popular with the upholders of law in Warsaw, but, to do him justice, he did his best not to annoy them by forcing himself on their attention. In the ordinary way he spent the hours of daylight hiding in his lodgings near the ghetto, but to-day he had been told that there was money for him if he met a man at noon outside the Opera, and money was a thing that Roman Baczewski could not resist.

He came down the wooden staircase from his room, and as he shuffled off towards the cathedral with his hands in his pockets and a cap drawn over his eyes, he failed to notice the watcher who slipped from a doorway and began to follow him. He was too busy keeping an eye open for policemen and planning how to spend the money that was coming to him.

A problem, really, how Roman ever made his living, and one that had better not be enquired into too deeply. He had not always used his present name, of course, and he had many memories, starting with the days when he had been a youth and content to work in the fields his peasant ancestors had tilled before him.

Roman hunched his shoulders higher. He had been a fool then, but he had soon learned other ways. There had been conscription and garrison duty at Lodz, when he had been the best shot in the regiment, and then that trouble with a girl in one of the cafés near the market place, and after that——

The man who was following quickened his pace and touched Roman on the shoulder. There was much of the rat in Roman Baczewski, and jumping into a doorway he turned round with bared teeth.

He had not been stopped by a policeman or a soldier, and there was something in that. Roman kept a hand in his pocket, where a knife lay comfortingly, and spoke.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"You were going to meet me outside the Opera?" asked the man who had followed him, and Roman relaxed.

"You will come with me."

The man was tall and smartly dressed, and spoke Polish with a foreign accent. Roman Baczewski looked at him doubtfully, but the bait had been tempting, and he nodded. They set off down the street at a good pace.

They went out of the Rynek with its painted houses, and passed the cathedral to cut across another street and make their way to the wide roads and modern buildings of the business quarter. There were pickings to be had in a neighbourhood like this, and Roman licked his lips Then, as he saw the building outside which his guide had halted, his terrors came back with a rush.

A plate beside the door announced it as the office of Heinrich Schultz & Co., and Roman disliked Germans. He backed a pace.

"Where are you taking me?" he asked, and backed again. " I'll talk to you here, outside. You won't get me in there."

The big man stepped forward and caught Roman's shoulder in an iron grip. A commissionaire emerged from the building and fell in on Roman's other side, so that it was uncomfortably like an escort with its prisoner. A policeman strolled towards them along the street.

" Will you come in, or shall I call that policeman . . . murderer and deserter ? " asked the big man.

The fight had left Roman Baczewski, and he was beginning to feel an ominous sagging at the knees. They passed into the building, and the doors swung to behind them so that he was lost to sight.

The stage was set, the actors gathered in the wings. Over Europe vultures gathered in readiness for their coming feast.

CHAPTER ONE

THE night was stifling, with a promise of coming thunder; and Anthony Morton Wayne slowed down to take the corner by the Three Farmers. It had been a long and tiring drive from London, but though he was very late he felt no enthusiasm at the thought of what would greet him when he reached his cottage at the far end of the village.

Stephen Hayward would be waiting for him; and since Stephen had arrived unannounced at Anthony's cottage two days earlier he had not been fit company for man or beast.

To start with, Stephen, who at Oxford had always ardently supported any lost causes that might offer and who had recently visited Germany on some mysterious mission that found no favour at all with the powers that be either there or in his own country, had burst in at midnight with a small suitcase and a rambling story of having caught the last bus from Witney and of being forced by overwork to take a few days' leave. Ever since then he had roamed about the sitting-room and refused to leave the cottage in a manner that looked very much as if he were suffering from a nervous breakdown.

Anthony, in the middle of the most difficult chapter of his new detective novel, had found that a guest who stared into space and bit his nails for hours was trying in the extreme. And then, of course, Mrs. Simmons, his housekeeper, had gone off to the wedding of her niece in Rochester and left them to a diet of cold beef and pickles and a barrel of beer that was unquestionably flat.

Anthony tried to wind the car window down still farther, and told himself that the night was too hot even for August. Mrs. Simmons would be back to-morrow, of course, but he had had a tiring day and to-morrow seemed very far away. There had been the journey to London that morning to see his publisher, endless waits, lunch with the publisher and a visiting American who had insisted on telling them how much better the United States would have tackled the international situation if it had been left to them, endless waits again over other business, and finally the running short of petrol outside Beaconsfield and the hunt for a filling station that had added the last touch to his misery. The newspaper placards in London had shouted " DANZIG: LATEST " while Anthony was nosing his way on to the Oxford road, and almost immediately the Anglo-French staff talks would be starting in Moscow and the protracted negotiations between Great Britain and the Soviet would be entering upon another stage.

" What's going to happen next ? " Anthony asked himself bitterly, and his question was answered by a lamp that waved to him compellingly from the road ahead. He trod on his brakes.

" It's you, Mr. Wayne, is it ? " asked a voice he recognised as belonging to the village police sergeant.

" Do you mean to say," asked Anthony impatiently, " that you stopped me just to tell me that ? "

His questioner advanced slowly and put one foot on the running board of the car. He took off his helmet and mopped his forehead with a gaudy handkerchief.

" Sorry to bother you, sir, but we've 'ad instructions to stop all cars. Morris saloon stolen at Bicester and believed to be 'eading this way. You've come back quickly, 'aven't you, sir ? "

" If you call an average speed of fifteen miles an hour quick, I have," retorted Anthony. " It's fourteen hours since I left here for London."

The sergeant was an old friend of his, and he discarded the many other biting comments that were on the tip of his tongue. After all, he supposed the police had to do their duty.

" Boring work for you. I hope you catch the blighter for your trouble."

The police sergeant was the owner of a one-track mind. He failed to respond to the sudden change of subject.

" Fourteen hours, eh ? " he echoed. " Then it couldn't 'ave been you I saw leaving your cottage 'arf an hour ago ? "

He ruminated for a moment. " Same make of car, same colour, and although I didn't stop it I could 'ave sworn the same number. I'd 'ave betted 'arf a dollar it was you."

" You'd have lost your bet, then," answered Anthony, and let in his clutch.

" Similar number, probably, and someone who was in Long Lane because he'd lost his way. I'm going home."

" It's a rum go, whichever way you look at it," remarked the sergeant thoughtfully; and as he saw no use in prolonging the conversation Anthony put his foot down on the accelerator and moved away.

The little village of Westford was asleep. He swung round the pond, turned up a winding lane, and came to the cottage where he wrote those detective novels that he hoped one day would make him famous.

There was a light in the sitting-room; and hoping that Stephen's mood would have changed since he saw him last, Anthony ran his car into the garage and went to the front door. He opened it with his latchkey, walked into the living-room, and looked round for his guest.

Stephen had, Anthony noted with disapproval, left every window closed so that the room was stifling. And although he had carefully drawn the curtains he had somehow managed to disarrange the tablecloth so that it hung to the ground on the side nearer the door. Anthony raised his voice.

"Stephen! Why don't you let some air in and try to keep the place cool?"

There was no answer. The clock ticked noisily on the mantelshelf, a chair creaked suddenly in the kitchen, a few slow drops of thunder rain beat on the windows. "The blighter must be asleep," said Anthony, going across to the fireplace, and it was at that moment, just as he reached for the cigarette box on the mantelshelf, that he realised why the room was so very still.

Realised, too, why the tablecloth had been pulled out of position. For coming out starkly from under the table, with the fingers bent as if their owner had scrabbled vainly at the carpet in a last effort, was a hand.

Stiff and terribly still, and protruding from the sleeve of a grey flannel coat that was undoubtedly Stephen's.

"Don't be a fool!" said Anthony.

He moistened his lips. "Come out, Steve. I've seen you, and it isn't funny. It's not a joke, I tell you."

The hand did not move. Anthony slipped on to his knees, bent forward, and then recoiled with a gasp and for a moment looked dazedly round the room.

Stephen Hayward would never worry anybody with his nerves again. Perfectly still, a look of agonised terror in his staring eyes, he lay face upwards on the carpet; and from his chest protruded the wooden hilt of a knife.

"Dead!" muttered Anthony.

He stood up, reached automatically for the cigarette box, took matches from his pocket.

"So he had some reason to be scared, after all," he said, and realising that the murderer might still be in the cottage he moved unwillingly towards the door of the room.

Best to make certain while he kept his nerve; and taking the poker in his hand Anthony went into the tiny kitchen, the stone-flagged passage, and, with a catch in his breath, the bedrooms upstairs. They were all empty, and coming back to the sitting-room he put down the poker beside the fireless grate.

The dark stain on the carpet widened so that it looked like a grotesque face, and Anthony found himself watching it as if he were hypnotised.

Don't touch the body: the words drummed in his ears. He was used to finding corpses in his books; had, indeed, discovered them in such unlikely places as the sideboard of a suburban villa, and (neatly dismembered) beneath the roll-top of the private desk of an American millionaire. It was the first time he had met with Murder in actual fact, however, and just at first his brain seemed numbed by the discovery.

Don't touch the body. Even the telephone might have finger-prints, and it was as he realised his duty and moved towards it that Anthony Morton Wayne stopped suddenly and dropped into a chair. For this was a situation that he had never imagined in his books,

KAR SINGH COLLE

and he was in a tighter corner than any hero he had invented.

And it was all true. Stephen Hayward lay huddled beneath the table, and the clock reminded Anthony that time was passing, but as he thought of the police sergeant's words a few minutes earlier he felt a shiver run down his spine.

There was a car, and he could have sworn it was Anthony's, the sergeant had declared. Stephen had been alone the whole evening, and when the police investigated his murder the sergeant would be more convinced than ever that Anthony had come back to his cottage earlier than he admitted and was anxious to hide the fact. And if Anthony had returned secretly and then denied it, the official reasoning would continue, there could be only one explanation. . . .

"Rot!" said Anthony suddenly, but all the same he shivered. He reached again for the telephone, but before he touched it there was the sound of a car drawing up outside and the crunch of footsteps on the gravel path. The door-bell jangled through the silent cottage.

There was something about that ring that finally brought home to Anthony the deadly gravity of his position. Whether it was the murderer returning or the police who already suspected something he did not know, but he moved his hand away from the telephone as if it were red-hot. The tablecloth at last slithered to the floor, and Anthony jumped a yard.

The hands of the clock showed that it was past one in the morning, and never before had a visitor come to Rose Cottage at that hour. Anthony took a step towards the door, and as the bell jangled again made up his mind.

He would explain to the police and nobody else, and going across he flung open the outer door. He was prepared for many things—a masked man levelling a revolver or his friend the police sergeant reaching for his notebook, but what he saw was very different from either.

Looking very small in the light reflected from the living-room, a girl stood in the porch. It had started to rain so that the water dripped from the brim of her little hat, and she was wearing a mackintosh with an upturned collar, and as she saw Anthony she stepped forward. A distant roll of thunder accompanied her words.

" Is this Rose Cottage ? " she asked.

Anthony moved a little to the side so as to screen the doorway. Too late he realised that he had left the door into the living-room ajar and that the light was on.

" It is," he admitted guardedly.

" And are you Mr. Wayne ? " went on the girl.

She looked at him as if something in his expression puzzled her. And, Anthony considered grimly, in view of his position it was not surprising.

" I'm Monica Hayward, Stephen's sister. I'm sorry I couldn't get here earlier, but his letter only arrived this evening and I had to drive up from Hampshire."

Anthony nodded. " Stephen wrote to you ? " he asked.

" He said I was to come at once to see him," answered Monica.

She was watching Anthony nervously. " There's nothing wrong, is there ? "

" There's nothing wrong at all," declared Anthony.

His brain was in a whirl, but he was conscious that whatever happened he must not blurt out the truth. Break it gently if he could, or send the girl away until the morning brought out everything and she would be bound to know the worst. Never let her learn like this, though, in a lonely cottage and while she was unprepared.

"It's no use your staying," he began dazedly, and because in his bewilderment he had opened the door a little farther than he had intended the girl caught sight of the lighted sitting-room and drew in a quick breath.

Framed in the passage doorway she could see the fireplace and the tablecloth upon the floor. Projecting stiffly into the middle of the picture was Stephen's hand.

"He's ill!" cried Monica; and before Anthony could protest she had slipped past him and was standing in the room. For a moment she gazed horror-struck at the scene before her, and then, forgetting everything, sank on to her knees beside the body of her brother.

She stayed there without a movement for what seemed hours, and then with a sudden lithe twist she was on her feet again and looking at Anthony with blue eyes that had become dark pools of fear.

"Stephen's dead," she whispered. "Dead, and you wouldn't tell me."

She backed away until she was standing against the far wall of the room. "*Did you kill him?*"

"I didn't!" protested Anthony, and again there was a silence that seemed as if it would never end.

"I didn't!" Anthony repeated. "I only got home a quarter of an hour ago, and I found him like this."

He had shut the front door of the cottage, and now with a last remnant of reasoning he shut the room door behind him and went over to the fireplace.

"I really am Anthony Wayne; here's a photograph if you don't believe me. I've been in London all day and someone must have done this to Stephen while he was alone."

The girl moved slowly away from the wall. She was very slim, and Anthony could see that she was shivering so violently that she could scarcely control the movements of her hands. As if every motion were an effort, she stripped off the raincoat and the little hat and dropped them to the floor.

" I believe you," she said simply, and ran a hand across her eyes.

" I'm sorry."

Without troubling to look at the photograph she sank into a chair.

" Of course you didn't do it. It was only shock that made me speak like that. Of course it happened while Stephen was alone."

" I hope other people will believe it as easily as you do," answered Anthony grimly.

He looked at his visitor. " I'm very grateful to you, but it's going to be the devil of a job explaining to the police."

" I came down to Oxford one Eights Week while Stephen was up, and saw you rowing," explained Monica. " I was all legs and freckles then, and I'm not surprised you didn't know me again, but I recognised you at once. That's how I knew you were telling the truth. And Steve . . ."

She stopped, and the grim reality of the corpse lying sprawled upon the carpet rose between them like a wall. Almost as if she were excusing herself she hurried on.

" I've scarcely seen Steve since he left Oxford. You see, I went to a finishing school in France, and by the time I came back he'd gone abroad and was far too busy to come home. It must be five years since we met each other, and when I got his letter this evening it came almost from a stranger."

"And you got here to find—this," said Anthony.

He nodded understandingly. "It can't mean quite as much as if you'd always been together, but it's bad enough. If I could have stopped it I wouldn't have let you come in here for all the world."

"I got in without asking," admitted Monica.

She stole another look at the body of her brother. "Do you know how this—happened ?"

"I don't," said Anthony. "I went to London to-day—or rather, yesterday—to see my publishers, and when I got home he was dead."

He moved towards the telephone. "I was just going to ring up the police. The trouble is, the police sergeant thought he saw my car outside this cottage half an hour before I really got here. He says he's ready to swear to it, and they're certain to believe him and think I did the murder and tried to arrive again later so as to give myself an alibi, and the real murderer will get away."

Monica's eyes widened. "You say the police actually saw his car ?" she asked.

"They did," nodded Anthony, "and what's more they swear it had my number plate. Sheer fantasy, of course, but it will be the deuce of a job to convince them that they're wrong."

He reached for the telephone receiver. "I'd better start to tell them straight away."

"Don't!" cried Monica, and leaped forward to catch him by the wrist. For the second time that evening Anthony was stopped just as his hand was on the receiver.

"You can't!" she went on urgently. "*Don't you see it's what they want ?*"

"What they want?" repeated Anthony dully.

Monica caught sight of his expression and shook her head impatiently. She tossed a lock of corn-coloured hair out of her eyes.

"The murderers," she explained; and there was such a ring of certainty in her voice that Anthony moved away from the telephone and went over to the empty fireplace.

"I don't know what you mean, but have a cigarette and explain."

"Like an idiot, I burnt Steve's letter before I came here," answered Monica. "He didn't tell me much in it, but it was obvious something had happened to make him desperately scared."

"What good does that do me?" demanded Anthony.

"My brother was in Nuremberg," pointed out Monica, "and when he came home suddenly he was so frightened that he even wrote to the sister he'd never thought about for years and asked her to come to him at once. He also mentioned that he had something to tell the Foreign Office. Suppose what he knew was so dangerous that his fears were justified? Suppose he was followed from Nuremberg, and this was the result."

"Suppose I tell that to the police, and they say I'm making up an unlikely story because I'm the murderer," answered Anthony.

He moved his neck. It was all very well to be conscious that he was innocent, but the thought of a condemned cell kept rising in his mind; of gaolers who never left him, of a man who asked his pardon before he pinioned him, of a bag thrust over his head and the endless moment while the hangman moved over to release the drop. How was he, with this damnable mistake over a car number against him, to escape this fate?

Anthony threw his scarcely smoked cigarette into the grate. "They—they don't hang innocent men," he said uncertainly.

The words gave him confidence. "Even if you did burn Stephen's letter, you can still say what was in it. And we'll find this car the sergeant saw and prove it wasn't mine."

Anthony looked round the room. "Or take that knife. It isn't mine, and they'll be able to trace the owner. Finger-prints, perhaps——"

"You write detective stories, and you've never heard of rubber gloves?" asked Monica. "And do you honestly think they'll ever trace the other car?"

It was a queer scene, with the girl who had arrived so unexpectedly pleading with Anthony not to throw his life away. She took a deep breath.

"I'm saying this because I want them to hang Steve's murderer. If they hang you instead, he'll get away. And—and it wouldn't be right if they hang you for someone else's crime. I believe that whoever killed Steve was afraid he might have told you his secret, and he arranged the car incident so as to throw suspicion on you and get you out of the way. He knew, as you say, that if you were suspected the authorities would put down anything you said to your imagination in trying to get yourself out of a hole."

"But what about the knife?" repeated Anthony.

He forced himself to kneel down beside the body, and his brain, that had been sharpened by working out a dozen detective plots, worked rapidly. It was a plain hunting knife, with a small brass plate "FOXLEE, CUTLERS, FLEET STREET" let into the hilt. Anthony got slowly to his feet.

" It could be," he agreed. " It could be as you say about the car, and that knife is new. If it's a gang, and they are as clever as you think, I'll bet that knife was bought this morning while I was visiting my publishers a hundred yards away, and that the man who bought it was made up to look near enough to me for the shopman to pick me out as the purchaser in an identity parade."

Anthony looked at the telephone again, but this time it was with the look of a man who gives up hope. For what chance could he have when once he lifted that receiver and called the police?

He turned to Monica. " I don't see that there's anything I can do about it."

" While Stephen was in Nuremberg he was working for the Friends of Peace," answered Monica unexpectedly.

It was the name, Anthony knew, of a great international pacifist organisation, and she hurried on. " Suppose you could get out of England, and go to Nuremberg to see if any of the men he knew there could help you with a clue? If you want the police to believe that you are innocent, your only hope is to show them the man who really did it."

" It's just a chance," muttered Anthony.

It was typical of Steve Hayward, he felt for a moment, that he should be forgotten already and that over his dead body they should be discussing another man's affairs. Typical of that queer, twisted character of his that had always driven him to take up arms for some cause that brought him nothing but mockery, to work for an unattainable ideal that brought him no credit among the vast majority of his fellow men. Monica's voice broke into his thoughts to give them the lie.

"Steve and I used to be good friends once," she said, and paused a moment. "He was older than I was, and he used to help me into trees I couldn't climb alone and tell me stories of the good he meant to do in the world when he was grown-up. He hasn't had the chance to do much, has he? I—I think he came back to England because he'd found out something that his country ought to know. Something desperately important, and once he met the real thing all his theories were forgotten. Mustn't we try to finish the last piece of work he set himself to do?"

"It's a very long shot," said Anthony shortly.

He shook his shoulders as if to throw off a burden. "And an even longer shot if I stay here and talk to the police. I'll try to go to Nuremberg!"

The clock ticked on, and he saw with a start that it was nearly three hours since he had got home. The thunderstorm had passed, and soon the first thin streaks of grey would be appearing in the East.

"Have you got any plans?" asked Monica.

"I shall have to make some pretty quickly," answered Anthony. "Mrs. Simmons, my housekeeper, will be here by seven o'clock. I've got to get away before then, and after that there are a lot of other things to think of. I could go to Calais on a trip without a passport, but how should I go on from there to Nuremberg? It looks absolutely hopeless. As for you, you'd better leave at once."

"But I'm not going yet!" protested Monica.

"You mean you'll stay here for Mrs. Simmons and the police?" demanded Anthony.

"I mean that we're in this together, and I'm going to help you," answered Monica. "They'd stop your own car in half an hour if you went away in it, and so we're going to use mine."

She paused. " I believe I can even help you over the passport. I live with my Uncle Henry down at Beaulieu, and he goes abroad on business twice a year. He's off again next week, and if I told him everything I believe he would let you borrow his chauffeur's papers so that you could go without any trouble. He's always looked after Steve and me, and I believe I could make him understand."

It would be a solution of nearly all his difficulties, but it sounded too good to be true. And, although he was in the mood to clutch at any straw, Anthony still shook his head.

" You mustn't," he protested. " Why should you risk it ? "

" It's no good arguing, and I'm going to see about some breakfast straight away. We'll never manage to dodge the police if we're starving," declared Monica, and as she went through the door into the kitchen Anthony suddenly realised that he was very hungry.

Realised, too, that somehow he had lost his fears and only knew that they were going to succeed. He bent down to pull a corner of the tablecloth over Stephen's face and hide that mask of terror, and found himself shamefacedly murmuring words that were an oath of dedication.

" I'll carry on, old chap," said Anthony; and went into the kitchen where there was already a smell of frying and where Monica greeted him with a smile that made him forget the tired look in her eyes and realise with a start that Stephen's young sister had turned out very differently from what his memory of her when she came up to Eights at Oxford would have led him to expect.

CHAPTER TWO

5 A.M. Amos Simmons, cowman at Dene Farm, put one arm out of bed and stopped the clamour of his cheap alarm. He worked his way carefully from under the bedclothes so as not to disturb his wife sleeping beside him, reached for his trousers and pulled them up over his flannel nightshirt, and making an armful of the rest of his clothes tiptoed down the staircase on stockinged feet.

A slow, solemn man in the middle fifties, Amos Simmons. He filled the kettle and put it on the gas, washed snortingly at the pump beside the sink, and by the time he had towelled himself and put on the rest of his clothes the hands of the grandfather clock in the corner of the kitchen pointed to a quarter past five. Amos made tea, munched ruminatively at the thick slices of bread-and-butter cut overnight by Mrs. Simmons, and at last decided that the room would be better for a little air. He went across and opened the front door, and stood for a moment gazing into the grey dawn.

It was an unusual time to see traffic in the lane, but a car passed by with a glare of headlights.

"Early," said Amos Simmons; and being now ready to go to work he poured out another cup of tea and carried it to the bedroom where Mrs. Simmons was just beginning to stretch herself and realise the pleasure of being still in bed.

"Just off, Ma," announced Amos.

She was always a bit of a mystery to him, this bustling Yorkshire wife of his who had come down to

Oxfordshire as nursemaid at The Hall and whom Amos had won in a whirlwind courtship that had been the one great and exciting adventure of his life. That and the War, of course, but that had been chiefly mud and shellholes. If their only son had not died of the influenzy afterwards . . .

" You'll be tired after going to that wedding," said Amos with unaccustomed thoughtfulness.

He saw with astonishment that Mrs. Simmons was showing unmistakable signs of being about to leave the bed.

" You'll not be getting up yet, Annie, will you ? "

" There'll be a lot to do after I've taken a day off," retorted Annie. " Wood to chop, an' all. And I'll have to start early if I'm to finish proper and get your breakfast for you soon as you get back."

She sat up in bed, an energetic little woman whose black hair was beginning to show traces of grey, and Mr. Simmons volunteered his piece of news.

" Mr. Wayne's been 'aving company. Two-seater came down Long Lane from 'is cottage not five minutes back."

" Might not 'ave come from Mr. Wayne's cottage," retorted Annie tartly. " What about your beasts ? " and as Amos blundered down the staircase and out into the road she picked up her cup of tea and put it to her lips. Not a bad husband as husbands go, was Amos, but Annie Simmons was never one to let the grass grow under her feet and she was determined to make up quickly for a day's lost work.

6 A.M. Percy Hopkins, milk roundsman to Dene Farm, revved up the engine of his aged van to take the gradient of Long Lane. He looked at his companion

with the complacent satisfaction of a man who does a good deed.

" Lucky I saw you coming out of your 'ouse, Mrs. Simmons," he told her. " If you want to start work early, I can get you to Mr. Wayne's in no time."

" See you get me there without running into the ditch, then," retorted Mrs. Simmons, grimly clutching her carpet handbag.

The van rattled on, swung round a corner, and drew up at the white-painted gate of Rose Cottage. Percy Hopkins got out, whistling cheerfully, and picked up a bottle of milk.

" And don't wake up the gentlemen when they're likely feeling tired," commanded Mrs. Simmons.

" O.K., Ma," answered Percy soothingly. " I'll give you a 'and with your bag while you unlock the door."

They went up the gravel path, Mrs. Simmons fumbling in her pocket. She put the key in the lock, turned it, and leaned her weight against the panels.

" Door's bolted inside," she said surprisedly.

Percy verified her statement. " Looks as if the gentlemen might well be tired," he agreed. " Been making a night of it and forgot you was coming this morning, if you ask me."

The thought of celebrations opened a new train of thought. " 'Ow did the wedding go off, Ma ? "

" Come round to the back of the 'ouse. There's a broken catch on the kitchen window," snapped Mrs. Simmons.

They went round the side of the cottage, and a mouse peeped out at them from under the bushes. Anthony had left a notice on the front door saying that Mrs. Simmons' services would not be needed that morning, and the mouse's nerves had been jangled ever since the insecurely pinned paper had been blown off its fastening and had chased him across the rose bed. With a whisk of his tail he decided to go back to his hole and mind his own business.

Mrs. Simmons, meanwhile, was thinking rapidly. She wished now that she had never accepted that lift, for Mr. Wayne was her employer and deserved loyalty, and now she was showing up his shortcomings before the biggest talker in Westford. Not, of course, that there was anything in this idea of celebrations, or in her husband's story of a car leaving early in the morning, but it would be best for her to get inside while the milk roundsman was still present and so be able to deny any scandal before he could spread it.

" Have you got a knife ? " she queried.

The window came up with a click, and Percy Hopkins put one leg over the sill.

" Too late in life for you to start climbing, Ma," he said jocularly. " I'll go through and open the front door."

" If you like," agreed Mrs. Simmons.

Percy climbed into the kitchen, opened the door into the living-room, and an instant later came bolting back to the window.

" Cripes, Ma, there's a stiff 'un on the floor! "

" Nonsense! " snapped Mrs. Simmons.

With sudden decision she heaved herself over the sill. " Here, let me have a look! "

It was five minutes later when she and Percy Hopkins came out again into the front garden, and once in the open Percy was very sick indeed. Mrs. Simmons regarded him dispassionately.

" Mr. 'Ayward murdered, and Mr. Wayne kidnapped, and Gawd knows what else," she muttered in an awed voice.

She caught Percy by the arm. "Get back in that van, and take me to Sergeant Potter's as quick as you can. It's down'ill, so you can make it lively."

Percy was recovering his equilibrium. "All right, Mrs. Simmons," he answered, and the next minute the van was bucketing downwards to the village while Rose Cottage hid a secret that very shortly would be known to all the world.

6.35 A.M. The station sergeant at Burcester beat a tattoo with his pencil on the desk in front of him. The room was lit by the early rays of morning sunshine, and looking at the two policemen on a bench to one side he was struck by the lack of charm displayed in the features of the constabulary.

It was the station sergeant's unlucky day. His wife was suffering from rheumatism, he had a shrewd suspicion that his eldest son was not doing so well as he pretended in his first office job and that things were working up to a crisis, and finally his superintendent, troubled with toothache that would not let him sleep, had arrived at the station earlier than usual with the obvious intention of making life insupportable for all his underlings.

"'Aven't you anything better to do than chew gum all the time, Bert?" demanded the station sergeant of one of the constables; and as the telephone tinkled beside him he wearily lifted the receiver.

"Burcester police station . . . What's that? . . . 'Oo did you say? . . . 'Ere, wait a minute!"

He clapped a hand over the mouthpiece and turned to his subordinates. "Joe, fetch the Sooper out of 'is office, and fetch 'im quick!"

The station sergeant felt justifiably excited. He waved urgently towards the inner door. "It's murder. Sergeant Potter, over at Westford, says there's a man been stabbed to death."

Superintendent Carstairs, massaging his aching cheek and surveying the papers in front of him, leaped to his feet at the constable's message. In two bounds he was out of his office and had snatched the telephone receiver from the station sergeant's hand. His audience listened breathlessly while he barked into the mouthpiece.

" Eh, what's that ? Speak up, man. You're sure of it ? "

The superintendent grunted impatiently. " Yes, yes, YES. Make it SNAPPY. Wayne missing, eh ? And denied your seeing him last night ? Reliable man saw car leaving early this morning, not Wayne's ? Right. I'll send men along."

He slammed the receiver back on its arm, turned to the sergeant who was standing petrified by the switchboard, and bellowed an order.

" Why didn't you put this through to my room ? Plug in a general call. Ready ? "

Superintendent Carstairs took a deep breath. " Wanted for enquiries murder at Westford Anthony Wayne. Tall, dark, twenty-seven, small moustache, may be driving grey or brown two-seater, probably making South. Stop all cars."

Toothache forgotten, he was thinking only of his future credit. The call passed to station sergeants in small country towns, from them to village constables, the police forces of neighbouring counties woke to frenzied action.

" Enquiries . . . Anthony Wayne . . . tall, dark, . . . stop all cars."

" . . . Brown two-seater . . . making South . . . stop all cars."

" Murder . . . stop all cars."

The station sergeant sighed with satisfaction. This made up for many nights of boredom, and conscious that the superintendent was wasting no time he glanced at the big clock on the charge-room wall.

The hands pointed to a quarter to seven.

Which was exactly the moment when Anthony, driving Monica's two-seater, looked sideways at his companion and decided that they were going to pull things through. It had been a strange meal they had eaten in the kitchen, with Stephen's body like an unseen presence in the other room, and Monica's nerves had suddenly given way in a storm of crying in which she had used an absurd little scrap of lace, while all Anthony could do was to creep off to his bedroom and reappear with a large, neatly folded handkerchief of his own that somehow amused Monica so that she turned to laughter and then put everything behind her save the work in hand.

It had been a good idea to bolt the door inside and pin a notice on it telling Mrs. Simmons that he had been called away and would not need her that morning. It ought to mean a clear day's start at least, and in that time Monica would be able to get in touch with her uncle, and if they were lucky Anthony would be out of the country before the police had guessed that anything was wrong.

" In case anybody's curious, I'd better take the wheel," said Monica.

She smiled up at him, and though her eyes were still larger than they had any right to be his heart warmed to her courage. She seemed to be sharing his exhilaration.

" Where are we going next ? "

Anthony stopped the car and they changed seats. "We'll make straight for Southampton, through Newbury and Winchester," he answered. "Then, as you suggest, I'd better stop there while you go to Beaulieu and try to get your uncle to agree to help. There's no danger, really. Mrs. Simmons isn't due at the cottage for another quarter of an hour, and then she'll find our notice."

"It sounds all right, but we mustn't run any risks," agreed Monica.

The small car sped on. At this rate, Anthony reckoned, they would be in Southampton by lunch time, and by that evening ought to know whether Monica's uncle was willing to be as complaisant as she hoped. They passed through a village where the postman was on his rounds and a late milkman was clinking bottles, came into the country again and followed a road that stretched bare in front of them, with trees on either side and the night's rain drying from the tarmac. It was just beyond Abingdon that they first learned that things had not gone according to plan.

A policeman stepped into the middle of the road ahead of them, and Monica put on her brakes. "What's the matter?" she asked Anthony. "We're doing over thirty, but I'll swear this isn't a built-up area. Leave this to me, and turn up your coat collar."

The car slowed to a halt, and she smiled brilliantly at the constable.

"Is anything wrong, officer?"

"Nothing to worry you, miss," answered the policeman cheerfully. "We're just stopping all cars as a precaution, like."

A comparatively new member of the force, he looked at Monica almost apologetically. She smiled again, and as a ray of sunshine lit up the lock of hair that curved from under her hat he became almost gallant.

" Chap killed at Westford. It wouldn't have anything to do with you, of course, miss."

" I hope you'll get the car you want," answered Monica sweetly. " My brother has toothache and I'm taking him to the dentist, so perhaps you will let me go on."

The mention of Anthony was an error in tactics. Left to himself, the constable would have had no eyes but for Monica. Now he glanced perfunctorily at her companion and stiffened.

" Better let me have a look at your driving licence, miss, and perhaps you'd tell me your name, sir. Have you come far ? " he asked still apologetically, but there was a rising note of excitement in his voice that could not be hidden. He had a foot on the running board, and his head was through the window beside Monica.

Suddenly she glanced past him. " Mind that motorcycle ! " she called urgently.

The constable spun round. Monica put one hand firmly in the middle of his back, stepped hard on the accelerator, and the next instant they had swung into a lane and were leaving the main road farther behind them every minute.

And Monica had finally crossed the narrow line that kept her on the right side of the law. Henceforth every policeman's hand would be against her, but as Anthony turned back into his seat from watching the constable's discomfiture he found that she was actually laughing.

" Do you think he's got our number ? " asked Monica.

" He hasn't," Anthony assured her. " Fortunately he hadn't seen your licence, and when I looked back just now he was too busy to worry. He had landed face downwards in a hedge, and it was full of prickles."

For a moment he had entered into Monica's mood, but all the same he knew that this must put an end to their companionship.

" What are you going to do now ? " he asked.

" I'm going to take you to Southampton," answered Monica.

Anthony shook his head. " Our policeman may not have got your number, but he knows all about your car. We shan't get another ten miles without having all the police in England whooping on our trail."

The lane they were in led straight into the heart of the country, and Monica slowed down. There was a lot of truth in what Anthony said.

" What do you suggest, then ? " she asked.

Anthony took a map out of the door pocket and flattened it over his knee.

" By the look of it, we're going to meet a branch railway. I say branch, because so far as I can see it doesn't serve anywhere at all. We come out by a station, though, and if you want to see your Uncle Henry and I want to get to Southampton, the best thing we can do is to leave the car and part. You catch a train, and I'll chance to luck."

" It might be safest," agreed Monica reluctantly. " Wherever you are this evening, ring up my uncle's house at Beaulieu and ask for me. If we're lucky, you'll be in Southampton and I'll be able to tell you that everything is arranged."

She made up her mind. " If anyone finds my car and recognises it as the one whose driver assaulted a policeman, I shall say it was stolen yesterday and that I've been looking for it everywhere."

"I'll take the wheel while you hold the map," said Anthony; and ten minutes later he dropped Monica at a station that seemed to be miles from anywhere where the aged porter informed them that a distant puff of smoke was the Up Train as would be due in foive minutes.

Foive minutes that sufficed Anthony to drive a little farther, leave the car in the grounds of an empty house that displayed a sign To Let, and take to his feet across the stubble of a large field. He had forgotten to take the car map with him and did not dare to go back for it, and the thought that he had been forced to part from Monica sooner than he expected depressed him far more than he would admit.

The day grew hotter and the cows showed their superior sense by standing motionless in the shade, and as Anthony tramped on his thoughts turned bitterly to the slenderness of his hopes. What chance had he of ever getting to Nuremberg and finding the gang that had pursued Stephen to his death?

That is, if there really were a gang to find. Even Inspector Rutherford, the sleuth whom Anthony had featured in half a dozen novels, would have found the situation baffling. Confronted with Stephen's body, he would have called in finger-print experts, photographic experts, and anybody else who might be useful, and even after that he would have had to consult Professor Mainwaring to learn the answer after three hundred pages. Anthony knew nothing about finger-prints except in theory, his knowledge of photography consisted in pointing a camera at his friends and pressing the trigger, and there was no Professor Mainwaring in real life.

"A nice fool I shall look, but I might as well go through with it," he muttered; and when his watch showed that it was midday and his stomach shouted that it was time for a meal, the lane he was following crossed a stream and he saw an inn beside the bridge.

It was called the Running Fox, and the name struck Anthony as appropriate. Besides, who in this country spot would have heard of a crime that could not yet be in the papers?

A wagon stood outside the inn, its horses munching from their nosebags, and inside was what looked like the driver and a sprinkling of local inhabitants. Anthony stepped boldly through the doorway to the shade inside.

"Hot weather for a walking tour," he remarked. "I want to sit down."

He had certainly been walking, and he felt that his hot and dusty appearance would support the story.

"I'd like some bread and cheese and beer."

"You want it in the parlour, sir?" asked the landlord.

He wiped down the counter. "'Ot weather for 'iking, I should 'ave thought."

The local inhabitants had suspended their tankards in mid-air to watch Anthony with the interest of those to whom strangers were few and far between, and he felt that his position was a little too prominent.

"In the parlour, please," he agreed.

"We don't get many 'ikers in these parts. Too far for 'em, if you ask me," remarked the landlord, and, leading Anthony into a room that was heavily overfurnished with bamboo tables and stuffed birds, he went off to fetch the refreshments.

"You'll be wanting a pint, sir, I suppose?"

"I certainly shall," answered Anthony.

The group in the public bar took up their tale again in mumbling voices. " So 'e turns round and says to me, 'e says——" " Right off the rick, and when 'is missus——"

The cheese and beer were good, and Anthony felt happier. He could not see into the bar, but when he heard the outer door open and someone come into the inn he felt no premonition of disaster. Here, at least, he was safe for the moment.

" Come to 'ave a drink, Sarge ? " asked one of the local inhabitants, and Anthony became suddenly attentive. If this were the sergeant of police, however, he was not on duty now.

" Make it the usual, Mr. Watson," he instructed, and there was a long pause. When he spoke again his voice was noticeably refreshed.

" I've been out all morning stopping cars."

He paused for a moment to make his next statement more effective.

" It's murder."

" 'Ave another drink, Sarge," invited a chorus of voices, and unbending in his new popularity he went on to give them details.

" Over at Westford; and a man's wanted for interrogation."

Anthony could almost see him winking slowly. " At least, that's what they say when they know he's done it. Height five foot eleven, small moustache, dark hair, believed wearing grey flannel trousers and blue sports coat——"

Mrs. Simmons had evidently found out what was missing from Anthony's wardrobe, for the description was correct. He looked down apprehensively at his clothing, and the landlord outside slapped his hand down on the bar.

"WHOY!" he roared, and remembered suddenly to sink his voice to a whisper.

The others, too, were obviously excited. "Buzz-buzzbuzz" came from the bar, and Anthony realised that the time had come to leave. He finished his beer at a gulp, tiptoed over to the open window, vaulted into the garden so that he narrowly missed a startled hen as he did so, and swung round the corner into the farmyard that flanked the Running Fox. He could see out of the corner of his eye that he had not acted too soon, for the police sergeant with a following of villagers was already leaping through the window after him.

Anthony skidded on a tuft of grass, swerved round a farm dog whose chain was just too short to let him bury his teeth in the intruder, and emerged into the lane to find a youth alighting from a bicycle that boasted the flamboyant legend CLARION GROCERY STORE.

"Groceries," announced the youth unnecessarily, and as the hue and cry swept suddenly into sight he looked suspicous. He was tall and loutish, and might have been eighteen.

"Oy, what's up?"

"I'm stealing your bicycle," retorted Anthony pleasantly, giving him a push into the ditch; and depositing the basket of groceries beside him to save weight he leaped into the saddle. He just had time to see that the police sergeant had misjudged the length of the watchdog's chain and looked like being kept in the farmyard for some time, and then he had reached the top of the hill and was free-wheeling down the opposite slope at a speed that made pursuit impossible.

It was all very well to be free for the moment, but Anthony realised that he was in a difficult position.

The Clarion Grocery Store, he had no doubt, was an excellent institution for anyone wanting bacon or a pound or so of sago, but its bicycle was far too easily recognisable, and anybody claiming any connection with the Clarion Grocery Store during the next few hours must expect to be the object of a good deal of suspicion.

So much so that Anthony spent the next hour in throwing himself and the bicycle into the hedge every time he heard someone coming. He had covered perhaps six miles in this way when he came to a house that stood beside the lane.

It was a house so suburban in appearance that evidently he was coming near a town. Standing in the road outside was a taxi, and the driver came out of the neat front door with two suitcases in his hands, walked down the gravel path and through the gate dividing the hedge of golden privet, and deposited his burdens in the car.

Anthony, prone behind the hedge, watched him impatiently. He was tired of concealment, and at this rate he would not reach Southampton in a fortnight.

The taxi driver, satisfied, resumed his seat. He was followed from the house by a woman in a flowered dress and a man in tweeds, who shut the door after him as carefully as if he were leaving the house empty for a month.

Which, it began to appear, he very nearly was. The lady paused before entering the taxi.

" Did you turn off the gas and water, Norman ? " she demanded.

" I did," answered her husband.

" And tell the milkman not to call for three weeks ? "

" Yes."

" And have you locked up safely ? "

The man in tweeds began to show signs of impatience. "How many times have I told you, Winifred, that we never get burglars in this part of the world, and that anyway everything's insured? I've got the tickets and I've locked the coal cellar, and if we don't start now we shall miss the train and never get on the boat."

"I do hope they won't start a war while we're in the South of France!" sighed the lady, and as the taxi moved off Anthony crept cautiously out of hiding.

For the man in tweeds had looked more or less his own size, and that record of there being no burglars in the neighbourhood was going to be broken very shortly.

If only the man in tweeds had been an inch taller and three inches smaller in the waist, Anthony decided twenty minutes later, everything would have been perfect. He had shaved off his moustache with the house-owner's spare safety razor and a very blunt blade, picked an unobtrusive blue serge suit from his wardrobe and a bowler hat from the hall cupboard, and now felt ready to face the whole police force of England.

Anthony went into the lounge, and blessed the forethought that had caused the man in tweeds to draw his curtains before leaving. A thin blue light filtered through the material, but at least he was secure from prying eyes. A bookcase stood against the far wall and there was a pile of ordnance maps on one of the shelves, and helping himself to the appropriate sheets Anthony left through the window he had forced half an hour earlier and closed it carefully behind him.

The bicycle, property of the Clarion Grocery Store, was hidden in the toolshed, and provided nobody visited the house during its owner's absence it would be safe from discovery until he returned. In any case it had outlived its usefulness as a means of transport; and cutting across a field at the back of the house

Anthony reached the main road just in time to stop a country bus that was going in the direction he wanted.

" Didcot," he ordered. The conductor punched a ticket while scarcely bothering to glance at him, and Anthony lit a cigarette contentedly and sat back to watch the changing view.

By now Monica ought to be well on her way to Beaulieu and Uncle Henry, and in his present mood Anthony again began to feel that she would get her way and that there would be nothing to stop him from reaching Nuremberg and getting the clue he needed.

" Are you stopping at Didcot ? " asked the man beside him, chattily.

" I'm going on to Southampton," answered Anthony absent-mindedly, and then caught his breath. Then, remembering that he was dressed in blue serge and bowler hat and that there could be no possible reason for suspecting him, he plucked up courage.

After all, wasn't everybody who wore blue serge and a bowler hat engaged in some kind of trade or business ?

" I've got a job down there as builder's foreman," explained Anthony. " It starts on Monday."

" Going across country a bit to get there, aren't you ? " pressed his questioner.

" My mother lives at Cirencester, and I've been staying there till I found work," improvised Anthony, and as this was apparently satisfactory the man in the next seat opened his newspaper and the rest of the journey passed in silence.

Anthony tried to forget the first shock of discovering Stephen's body at Rose Cottage. The constable beyond Abingdon, the outraged police sergeant at the Running Fox, and the errand boy of the Clarion Grocery Store still mourning his bicycle, were all receding farther with every turn of the bus's wheels.

CHAPTER THREE

SOUTHAMPTON High Street can only be properly appreciated when the viewer is well fed. Anthony, alighting stiffly from his last bus, was in no mood for gazing in shop windows, and even a glimpse of the clock tower of the Civic Centre failed to relieve his gloom.

He seemed to have changed buses a dozen times; and, on the only occasion when he had more than ten minutes to wait, the nearest available teashop was of that kind which considers a poached egg on toast to be a satisfying meal. It had made him bitterly regret his interrupted lunch at the Running Fox, and as to satisfy his own pride he had felt it incumbent on him to adopt a new character for every questioner, Anthony now felt more than ready for some food and sleep . . . both in large quantities, but his need of food was urgent.

Anthony skirted the Bar, and as he reached the far side his eye was caught by a porch projecting over the pavement and bearing the magic letters A.A. and R.A.C.

The menu displayed beside the door showed that he could have a table d'hôte dinner for 4*s*., and although all the loose cash he had been able to collect from Rose Cottage amounted to less than five pounds Anthony decided to be reckless. He went inside the hotel and climbed the staircase to the dining-room.

It was a room overlooking the High Street, with old silver on the sideboard, and pictures on the walls of the Death of Nelson and of eighteenth-century gentlemen on horseback raising their glasses to ladies who leaned out of windows. Anthony went to a table in the corner and sat down facing the wall.

He had bought an evening paper in the street, and as soon as he had given his order he opened it. He was prepared for a shock, for among the posters had been one that flared with the words " COTTAGE MURDER: LATEST," but what he saw was even worse than he had expected.

The front page dealt with the British, French and Soviet talks that had begun in Moscow. There was also the usual inflammatory speech on Poland by the usual Nazi spokesman, and ignoring this and the cricket scores in the stop press, Anthony turned to the middle page. The photograph that stared at him over three columns of print made him gasp with dismay.

It was not one of his favourite portraits, but that was not the trouble. The point was that it was perfectly recognisable, and with the caption that he was wanted for questioning it was enough to send any loyal citizen running for the police as soon as he was sighted.

Unless, of course, the removal of his moustache and the substitution of blue serge and a bowler hat for his usual clothes were enough to prevent recognition. The waitress, who was more interested in finishing her evening's work than in looking at her customers, put a grilled steak and a dish of chipped potatoes in front of Anthony, and he drained the tankard of ale she also brought him and gave it back to be refilled.

He had somehow never expected to see a photograph, and it entirely altered the situation. He had meant to ring up Monica as soon as he finished his meal; but now it must be to tell her that things were getting too dangerous and that he could not involve her any further.

" And after that, I shall have to try a day excursion to Calais," Anthony told himself grimly. He propped his paper against the vase of flowers in the centre of the table, so that his face did not show even in the mirror on the wall in front of him, and had it not been for the family that entered as he was finishing his steak, all might have been well.

There was a fair sprinkling of diners, and the party made for the table beyond Anthony. It consisted of a fat man in a dark suit, accompanied by his wife and two plump daughters, and as they turned to negotiate the angle that would bring them to their seats the wife's handbag brushed the menu off the table on one side while the husband's sleeve caught Anthony's paper on the other and threw it to the ground.

"I'm sorry," said the wife.

"They don't allow much room here, do they?" roared the fat man affably.

The small excitement had drawn the attention of the room, and it seemed to Anthony's fevered imagination that he could not have been given more publicity if he had announced his identity through a megaphone. He bent down to pick up his newspaper, raised himself again, and found that he was looking straight into the mirror on the wall.

And, by some trick of light, his eyes caught those of the man at the other table who was picking up his menu. For a moment they gazed into the mirror as if they were standing face to face.

In that instant, too, Anthony could not help showing recognition. For the man at the other table was the American with whom he and his publisher had lunched in London only the day before.

Was it only so short a time ago as that? It seemed years to Anthony; and yet while they looked at each other he had known that the recognition was mutual.

Unless it was all his nerves. Anthony found that his breath was coming quickly and that a cold sweat had sprung out on his forehead, and yet he tried to tell himself that he must have been mistaken. He might have recognised the American, but he could scarcely have been recognised himself.

After all, he was now clean shaven and wearing different clothes. And yet, while Anthony had sat through the long lunch yesterday opposite that very American, he had come to the conclusion that there was very little the eyes behind those horn-rimmed glasses missed.

" I'm sailing for home in a day or so," the visitor had told them, " but before I go I want to see a little of your Southern England."

He had become almost lyrical. " Winchester and the Rufus Stone, the Mayflower Memorial, which I didn't have time to see when I landed at Southampton, the New Forest, and the *Victory* battleship on which your Lord Nelson lost his eyesight at the Battle of the Nile."

Anthony and his publisher had looked at each other and refrained from correcting their guest's history, for he was a very big man indeed in his own line, and now here he was in Southampton and by the worst of luck was staying at the hotel where Anthony had come to dinner.

And, owing to the clumsiness of a fat man in search of food, he had seen Anthony's face. Anthony had replaced the newspaper hopefully in front of him, but now he peeped round it into the mirror and what he saw confirmed his fears.

The American had only half finished the grapefruit with which he had presumably meant to start his meal, but now he was speaking urgently to the waitress and at the same time trying to appear elaborately unconscious of there being anybody at the next table.

"I think I'll feed later, after all," he told her, and getting up he sauntered over to the dining-room door. If ever a man had the appearance of going to fetch a policeman while trying not to look like it, that American had it then.

Anthony signalled wildly to the waitress. The rest of his steak had to be sacrificed, and he must get away quickly.

"Bill, please," he ordered. "I'm not feeling well."

He pressed a ten-shilling note into her hand. "I want to get into the open air."

"Hadn't you better sit down, sir?" asked the waitress. "I'll fetch your change from the office."

"Keep it for yourself," answered Anthony recklessly, and the next moment he was leaping down the staircase towards the hall.

The slight delay meant, however, that the American had a useful start. There was a telephone box at the bottom of the staircase, but as Anthony came down he could see that it was empty. He hurried past it and along the hall, and arrived in the street to find that the American had not troubled to telephone because he had seen a policeman outside the hotel.

He was busily pouring his story into the constable's ears, and as Anthony emerged he saw the American grab the policeman by the arm and point in his direction. There was nothing for it but to take to his heels.

"Hi!" shouted the American.

"Excuse me——" began the policeman uncertainly, and as he was unable to cross the road owing to the press of traffic, Anthony swerved to his right and ran. He came to a side street, and turned right again.

It seemed to him that the citizens of Southampton had been waiting for this excitement for years. The policeman, pursuing hotly, had dragged out his whistle and was blowing short, sharp blasts, while the American was running strongly and shouting " Stop thief ! " The Saturday-night shoppers rallied to the call like men.

A butcher's assistant who was pushing up a lowered sunblind reversed his pole and tried to insert it between Anthony's legs. Anthony leaped over the obstruction, pointed ahead and shouted " Stop thief ! " himself, handed off a postman who loomed up in front of him, and sped on.

He was away from trams and buses now, and sprinting down a narrow street. Behind him there was the clamour of the chase, and the original policeman, who had been joined by two colleagues, was displaying unexpected prowess as a runner.

A sleepless night, followed by a long day in buses, is not the best preparation for strenuous exercise, and Anthony's breath was beginning to come in painful gasps. He took the next turning on the right, which was little more than a paved alley between shops, and although he had lost his bearings he was able to guess that he was heading for the docks.

Another turning to the left, and Anthony was in a still more depressing passage flanked by hoardings. He put on that extra inch of speed which would enable him to leave it before his pursuers could see which way he went, and it was as he emerged into the street at the far end that he realised that all was over.

Slowly, majestically, a sergeant and constable of the Southampton police force were approaching. As yet they were unconscious of the turmoil behind Anthony, but it could not be more than a minute before they, too, joined the chase.

At any moment the hunt might turn the corner, and although the policeman who was leading had stopped whistling so as to keep his breath for running, it would only need his appearance for the reinforcements to bar the street. A door with a light above it was on Anthony's right, and seeing that it was open he swerved across the pavement towards it.

It was the doorway of a public hall, and over it was a painted canvas that invited visitors.

THE FRIENDS OF PEACE

PUBLIC MEETING

ALL WELCOME

It seemed to Anthony a good omen that he should be driven to take refuge with the organisation to which Stephen had devoted his life, and a young man in the vestibule gave him a welcoming smile.

" You needn't have run, sir. The chairman has only just begun to speak," he said, handing Anthony a printed leaflet.

" I didn't want to miss anything," panted Anthony, and forcing his way through the swing doors beyond he found himself standing at the back of a moderately sized hall. The rows of chairs were only half filled, and Anthony walked towards the stage, partly because there might be an exit at that end and partly because the farther he went the farther he got away from the police outside.

The chairman, a fat young man with glossy black waves of hair and an unctuous voice, glanced round at the noise of Anthony's entrance and continued with his remarks. The platform party settled back into their seats and Anthony edged his way forward, accompanied by glowering looks from the audience, until he reached the stage.

"We are exceptionally fortunate," the chairman was just saying, "to have with us to-night Dr. Muller, who has done so much for the Cause both in his native Holland and all over the world. Troubled as it is——"

He ran a hand through his hair and entered on a new and rolling period. "In a few minutes we shall have the inestimable privilege of hearing him in person, and——"

Yes, there was a door beside the stage, and with a sigh of relief Anthony found that it was unlocked. He did his best to give an impersonation of a distinguished visitor arriving late to take his seat beside the speaker, and dived through.

He did not, however, go on to the platform. A passage ran straight ahead, with doors opening into dressing-rooms on either side, and at the far end of the passage was an open door that led into a street.

In the doorway, his flat cap plainly visible, stood another policeman.

"Aren't there any civilians in Southampton?" asked Anthony bitterly; and as a last hope he opened the door of the dressing-room nearest the stage and went in. He closed it carefully behind him, and turned round to find that the room was already occupied.

The air was thick with the scent of a first-class cigar. An easy chair stood by the window, and in it, his legs comfortably outstretched, sat a tall, plump man of middle age with a benevolent expression. He regarded Anthony for a moment out of a pair of grey eyes masked by gold-rimmed spectacles, and then he spoke.

" You wish me to start my lecture ? "

He indicated the lengthening ash on his cigar. " I shall be sorry to leave this sanctuary for the discomfort of the platform."

" I'm sorry," said Anthony. " I didn't know you were here."

He looked wildly round the room. " May I get out of the window ? "

" Personally, I should have no objection, but it only opens on to a yard with a locked gate," replied the occupant of the room urbanely; and as if realising for the first time that something was wrong he rose to his feet.

" I am Dr. Muller, the speaker for this evening. May I enquire why I am honoured by your visit ? "

They were only divided from the stage by a thin partition, and Anthony could hear that the drone of the chairman's voice had faltered suddenly and stopped. There seemed, too, to be a confused trampling in the hall that could not be accounted for by the small number of people he had seen as he came in.

His friend the agile policeman must have met the sergeant and constable who were coming the other way, and once that happened he would soon realise that his quarry could not have left the street. From that to the searching of the lecture hall would only be a matter of minutes, and at any moment the searchers might decide to come behind the stage.

By now, too, it was too late to risk that long, straight passage leading to the policeman outside. Anthony's brain was working feverishly, and he remembered some talk he had heard to the effect that the Friends of Peace were well-disposed towards all those who opposed the manufacture of armaments, even, it was whispered, if that opposition took unlawful shape.

There were rumours that the Friends of Peace encouraged strikes in this and other countries; and Anthony decided that he had only one hope.

" Is it possible, my friend," asked Dr. Muller softly, " that you have no right to be here ? That you are in trouble with the authorities and wish to make me an accessory after the fact ? "

" The cops have been chasing me all day," admitted Anthony desperately, and taking up his new rôle he dropped into the only other seat in the room and looked up into his questioner's face with what he hoped was impudent defiance.

" I'm playing the same game as you are, guvnor, see ? Trying to stop the blasted Capitalists piling up armaments to use against the Workers. I've been telling the comrades where they stand at Gosport, and the damned busies say I was inciting to insurrection. They want to shut my mouth."

Dr. Muller nodded. " An agitator, eh ? " he murmured thoughtfully, and pulling a gold watch from his waistcoat pocket he examined its dial and then stood swinging it as if time were not vital. Already Anthony's quickened ears had caught the sound of searchers coming behind the stage, and even as he gathered himself together for a dash into the passage Dr. Muller, of the Friends of Peace, stepped past him with a movement that was curiously agile for so large a man, and gripped the handle of the door.

" Stay here, my friend," he ordered, and again with that uncanny quickness went outside and shut the door behind him.

Through the panels came the sound of questioning, and then the doctor's soft tones answering calmly. He seemed to be laughing at the idea of having seen anybody, and the chairman's voice was raised in an assurance that Dr. Muller had been in that room all the time. Evidently drawn by the open door at the far end of the corridor, the police moved away.

Anthony thought of Monica, and of the chance that she might still have been drawn into his difficulties if he were captured, and now that the danger was over for the moment he was astonished to find that he felt suddenly limp. Then, as his rescuer came back into the room, he got to his feet.

"Thanks," he said unsteadily. "I can't tell you——"

"Don't try," interrupted Dr. Muller.

He eyed Anthony dispassionately from behind those blank spectacles. The chairman had gone back to the platform and was rolling out phrases with renewed vigour, and with a feeling of unreality Anthony realised that everything was going on just as if he had never intruded into this meeting of idealists who were working for world peace.

"The police have gone, unless I choose to call them back and say I found you here," continued Dr. Muller. "I think, my friend, that I might find it more amusing to discuss with you the reasons for your very injudicious activities at Gosport."

He became suddenly businesslike, and his voice hardened.

"Your name?"

"Alfred—Alfred Wheeler," answered Anthony.

"You will stay here, Alfred Wheeler, until I have finished my address," instructed Dr. Muller. "Afterwards, you will accompany me to the house where I am living at present, and we will have a little talk."

There was nothing in his voice to cause misgiving, and yet for some reason Anthony felt a cold shiver running down his spine.

"I'd rather go," he muttered, and tried to bring out the grudging thanks that Alfred Wheeler would have considered his protector's due.

"You've done a good day's work, Comrade. I'm very grateful."

"You wouldn't leave in this unceremonious way when with a few minutes' talk you can repay all your debt to me?" asked Dr. Muller in a pained voice.

He was standing with his back to the door, and opened it as the chairman's voice showed signs of coming to a stop.

"I fear I have been discourteous to my audience in not appearing sooner on the platform. My secretary will give himself the pleasure of sitting with you until I have inflicted my speech on the Southampton branch of the Friends of Peace, and then I shall hold myself at your service. You agree?"

Again there was that ring of authority in his voice, and Anthony swallowed. It seemed absurd to go into the streets while he was safe here. He ought to be jumping at the opportunity.

"I'll stay, Comrade," answered Alfred Wheeler unwillingly; and as Dr. Muller left to make his speech his secretary came into the room and sat down.

The next hour was one of the longest Anthony had ever spent. Dr. Muller's secretary, whom he did not introduce and merely addressed as Max, contented himself with a slight nod and then sank into his employer's vacant seat and began to pick his teeth. He had a pronounced cast in one eye, his hair was closely cropped, and his left cheek was disfigured by an old duelling scar. The man was a Teuton of the Teutons, and if, as Anthony supposed, he had been turned out of Nazi Germany, then for once Nazi Germany had Anthony's support. Max did credit to the international character of the Friends of Peace, but as a companion for the evening he was a distinct failure.

Anthony abandoned all attempts at conversation and moved his chair as near as possible to the partition so that he could listen to the doctor's speech. He possessed a splendid voice with carrying qualities that easily overcame the thin panelling, and from the roar of welcome that greeted his appearance it was apparent that his fame among the Friends of Peace was great.

It was apparent, too, that in refusing to sit on the platform during the chairman's opening words Dr. Muller had chosen the right course. He was a man who preferred to make a dramatic entrance at the right moment, and as he listened to him Anthony was moved to reluctant admiration.

Dr. Muller spoke with conviction, and his audience was obviously completely carried away. He painted a glowing picture of world peace, sketched in the forces arrayed against it in many countries, and spoke of his own work all over the world as an apostle of disarmament.

It was when he mentioned Germany that Anthony's interest first turned to admiration. He did not boast, but from small references it was evident that he had risked the concentration camp, or even worse, in his determination to work for his ideals. The man spoke with a fierce sincerity that made Anthony's forebodings seem the merest folly; and as the speech came to an end with a peroration that brought the audience to its feet, Anthony told himself that it had been sheer benevolence that had influenced his rescuer and that the least return he could make was to talk to him afterwards as he wished.

Had it not been for Monica, he might even have felt inclined to tell the doctor the whole truth and ask for his advice. It went against the grain to stay in the skin of Alfred Wheeler, who was wanted by the police for sedition at Gosport, but as Anthony was considering the matter the Continental Organiser of the Friends of Peace came back into the room.

Dr. Muller had somehow managed to rid himself of the attentions of the unctuous chairman, and as his secretary rose to his feet he rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

" An excellent meeting, my dear Max. And now we have a busy evening before us."

He turned his round spectacles, on which the light glinted bafflingly, towards Anthony. " As for you, Alfred Wheeler, we shall be able to have our unfortunately postponed talk."

The words were friendly enough, so why was it that again something sinister was suggested to Anthony's mind ? Even with the glamour of the doctor's speech still on him, he felt a chill. His inclination to tell everything faded away.

" Thanks, but I'd better be off," he answered. " I don't want to get you into trouble."

" You won't get me into trouble, I assure you," Dr. Muller said.

He lit another cigar and blew out a rich cloud of smoke. " My car is waiting at the back, and if you object to accompanying me I shall wonder whether there is more behind your adventures than you have already disclosed."

Max moved up beside Anthony and gripped his arm. " March ! " he said curtly, and telling himself that his misgivings were absurd, and that because he disliked the looks of Dr. Muller's secretary it was not fair to think that his employer was other than devoted to the cause of peace, Anthony went.

He also went because he had no other choice. He did not flatter himself that all vigilance would have been relaxed in Southampton since his disappearance, and if he were lucky Dr. Muller might give him a lodging for the night. A big black saloon was backed into the narrow entry of the far exit, and as the uniformed chauffeur opened its door Dr. Muller politely ushered Anthony inside.

The car glided off, and swung round a couple of corners to come into the High Street just below the Bar. They passed round the gateway of the ancient city of Southampton, forked left, and after that Anthony lost all sense of direction. It was now dark, and he only knew that they had left the business centre behind them and were passing through a residential neighbourhood of medium-sized houses each in its own garden.

The road they were in stretched interminably ahead of them, and they left it to turn into a street of older buildings that might once have been part of a detached village. The car slowed down.

"I find it necessary for my work to rent a furnished house," explained Muller politely. "Its amenities are not all I could have wished, but perhaps we shall be able to prevail on you to pay us a longer visit than we first expected."

They drew up outside a green-painted gate, and with his host leading and Max bringing up the rear, so that Anthony felt uncomfortably like a prisoner, they went up the front path to the house. It was not until the door had been opened by another man-servant and Anthony had been ushered into a room on the left of the hall, that Muller spoke again.

The room was obviously intended for a study, but equally obviously a man of the doctor's taste would only have tolerated it in a temporary home. With a wave of the hand, Dr. Muller excused the Victorian solidity of the furniture and the hideous bronze ornaments on the marble mantelpiece and motioned Anthony into an arm-chair. Then, seating himself at the desk, he spoke the fatal words that made Anthony realise that his subconscious warning had been right.

"And now, my dear Anthony Wayne," said Muller softly, "you and I have much of mutual interest to discuss."

There was a moment's silence. Anthony had been in the act of lowering himself into his chair, and for a second he remained motionless before he came erect with a leap. He glared at his host.

"What do you mean?" he asked tensely.

Why had Muller helped him if he had been recognised, and what did he mean when he spoke of things of mutual interest? The car had moved away to the garage, and through the window Anthony could see that the lamp-post outside was shining on an empty road. He edged unobtrusively towards the door.

"My name's Alfred Wheeler, I tell you. Are you talking about the chap who's wanted for murder? You won't fasten anything like that on me."

"If you are reasonable, nobody will fasten even a halter round your neck, Mr. Wayne," answered Dr. Muller suavely. "Should you be considering a dash for freedom, however, I would advise you to reconsider the matter before I have to take strong measures."

Again the commonplace room seemed charged with evil. Max had slipped across the room to draw the heavy curtains across the window, and as he turned to the room again Anthony saw that his hand was in his jacket pocket and that there was a significant bulge spoiling the line of his grey suit. He also realised that the door had opened a fraction and that the man-servant was standing just outside. It was useless to try to escape, and with an attempt at jauntiness he sat down again and crossed his legs.

" I may as well be comfortable if I'm talking to lunatics," he remarked. " I'm Alfred Wheeler, I tell you. Have you got a cigarette ? "

" You shall have food and cigarettes as soon as you have admitted your identity, Mr. Wayne," replied Dr. Muller coolly. " Until then, abstinence may help reflection and bring you to a more reasonable frame of mind."

" Bats ! " remarked Anthony rudely.

He jumped to his feet and gave an impersonation of Alfred Wheeler in a tight corner. It was a thin chance, but his only one.

" Stop talking that sort of rot, can't you ? "

" Would you prefer us to call in the police ? " suggested Dr. Muller.

A telephone bell rang somewhere in the back of the house, and Max left the room. Dr. Muller leaned forward in his seat, pulled open a drawer in the desk, and took from it a businesslike automatic which he placed on the blotting pad in front of him.

" I hate to be melodramatic, but this may prevent your underestimating the seriousness of your position."

" I'm Alfred Wheeler, I tell you. Wanted at Gosport for what they call sedition," cried Anthony violently. " What's all this talk about Anthony Wayne ? Do you think you're going to frighten me ? You daren't let off that gun of yours in a neighbourhood like this, and if you say any more I'll prove it."

" If you attempt to do so, I shall squeeze the trigger," answered Dr. Muller. " My chauffeur will go to the car and cause it to backfire, and any inquisitive neighbour will think that the shot was merely one of the earlier explosions."

He paused a moment, and his voice changed to the mellow tones of his speech that evening. " Why not be reasonable, Mr. Wayne ? Why not sit down and tell me your adventures ? "

Dr. Muller had removed those deceptive spectacles and laid them on the desk, and Anthony realised that the chill grey eyes never softened to match the friendliness of his tone. In this suburban study, with its red wallpaper and its steel engravings, he seemed a far more formidable person than the man who had smoked a quiet cigar in the dressing-room while he was waiting to make his speech to the Friends of Peace.

How was it, too, that he had recognised Anthony so easily ; and why was he talking to him like this instead of sending for the police ? It seemed incredible that this man could in any way be involved in Stephen's death, but he was obviously interested, and Anthony did not dare to answer any questions for fear of implicating Monica somehow.

" I tell you my name's Alfred Wheeler," he repeated stubbornly.

" So," answered Dr. Muller and pressed the bell beside him. The man-servant came into the room, and Dr. Muller smiled as if he were offering Anthony a treat.

" We shall have to make you speak, I see. It may take time; but we can lend variety to the persuasion that will prevent it becoming wearisome."

He rose to his feet. " Have you ever been beaten with a rubber club ? " he barked. " You scarcely feel it at first, but after ten minutes your nerves are screaming, so that you would tell your worst enemy your most precious secrets."

" I'll be damned if I tell you anything," answered Anthony between his teeth, and at that moment the door behind him opened again and Max came into the room.

At the same instant Anthony acted. He dodged so that Max was in the line of fire between him and Dr. Muller, charged into the passage, and made for the front door. He was conscious that the door was locked, and even as he plucked at the bolts with feverish haste he knew it was too late. If only it had been on the catch he could have got away.

Max, leaping after him, had snatched up a heavy ruler which he brought down with all his force on Anthony's head. The man-servant dived for his ankles, and although Max's blow had misfired, so that it only glanced on Anthony's shoulder, the odds were too much for him. His arm was wrenched behind him and savagely twisted, and Max, breathing heavily, led the way back to the study.

" I came, Herr Doktor, to report that Number Seventeen has been on the telephone and would like to see you at once," he reported.

Dr. Muller nodded. " And coming in carelessly, my dear Max, you nearly let our prisoner escape," he commented. " Still, as your quickness retrieved the situation, I will overlook the fault."

" I didn't think——" began Max apologetically.

" My servants are expected to think. Put Mr. Wayne in an upstairs room, and we will go to see Number Seventeen," retorted Muller.

The man-servant wrenched Anthony's arm, and they went in a little procession up the stairs. Dr. Muller threw open a door that led into a room at the side of the house and motioned to Anthony to go inside.

" Our little chat, Mr. Wayne, must be postponed, I fear. I shall be back in an hour; and perhaps by then you will have had time to reconsider your position."

The room was small, with a bed showing the wire mattress and devoid of bedding, a wardrobe, and a dressing-table.

"Should you attempt to escape," continued Dr. Muller, indicating the man-servant, "Friedrich here will remain behind to deal with you. And he will be armed. Should you wish to call the police, you have only to lean out of the window and shout for help. But they tell me that hanging is an unpleasant end. On the whole, Mr. Wayne, I expect on my return to find you a wiser man."

"Try any tricks and you'll be sorry," advised Max, and going over to the electric light he removed the bulb so that the room was plunged in darkness.

"In an hour's time, Mr. Wayne," repeated the doctor suavely, and the next moment the lock of the door had clicked behind them and Anthony was alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANTHONY waited until the sound of retreating footsteps had died away, and then sank on to the edge of the bed with his head between his hands. His shoulder was aching dully where Max had hit him, his arm was still painful from Friedrich's twisting, and for the moment he was absolutely finished.

This was what his adventures had been leading up to ever since the moment when he and Monica had left his cottage. It was for this that she had risked herself to help him; and now, instead of being able to track down Stephen's murderers or discover the motive that lay behind their plotting, he had blundered straight into the hands of a man who was evidently in their confidence.

A man who talked of rubber clubs as an inducement to speech, and gritting his teeth Anthony swore that whatever happened he would say nothing. Monica would be with her uncle now and would wait for him to get in touch with her, and he must do nothing to bring on her the danger that had stricken down her brother. For Dr. Muller was playing a game that would spell risk to anyone who crossed his path.

The throbbing in Anthony's head and shoulder was passing away, and he got up and paced about the room. Its window looked over a stretch of neglected garden to the blank side of the house next door, and craning out Anthony saw that the wall stretched sheer below him without any of the traditional water-pipes or stems of ivy that should have been there to help him to escape. As Muller had pointed out, it would be extremely unwise to draw attention to himself by shouting, and Anthony went back to the bed and again sat down.

He had noticed the button of an electric bell in one corner of the room, and although Max had left him in darkness he could remember exactly where it was. It was a forlorn hope, but after giving Muller a little longer to get well away from the house Anthony was going to ring that bell and see what happened. If Friedrich were fool enough to come into the room, he would find a fight waiting for him.

"Not that I'd stand a chance," said Anthony ruefully, remembering the strength of Friedrich's grip and the fact that the man was armed and would not mind using his weapon. He sat and waited while an occasional car went along the street and the luminous hands of his wrist-watch crept round until he saw that he had been there twenty minutes; and then his attention was attracted by a sound outside the window.

It was the muffled sound of something grating furtively against the sill and then stopping, and almost at the same instant a bell shrilled insistently at the back of the house.

The bell made Anthony forget the window altogether. It could scarcely be the doctor coming back forty minutes earlier than he was expected; and jumping to his feet Anthony went over to the door of his prison to hear Friedrich cross the hall and go into the back regions of the house while the bell called him again and again. A voice spoke from the window, and Anthony spun round.

"Mr. Wayne!"

The tone was somehow reassuring, but in his present mood Anthony would have distrusted anything on earth. He took a step forward and saw that, framed in the patch of light that was the open window, there was now a head.

" What are you doing ? " asked Anthony.

" Standing on a ladder," replied the voice.

The ladder was short, and only the tip of it could be seen against the sky. A man who has been hunted all day is naturally suspicious, and Anthony walked across the room ready to catch the projecting ends in his hands and push the climber violently into space.

Was this another enemy, or had the police found him at last ? If it was the latter, the formula of arrest was strangely different from what he had expected, and Anthony paused before taking violent action.

" Who are you, and what are you doing on that ladder ? " he repeated.

The man outside the window gave a grunt of irritation. " If you want to waste time, I'm playing Romeo to your Juliet," he answered.

He took a deep breath. " Why stand about arguing ? I've given a tramp half a crown to ring the back-door bell and engage the attention of your watchdog, I've contracted tennis elbow through carting this ladder from next door where they're building a garage, and now I'm risking fallen arches because I have to stand here talking to a man who's such a fool that he won't even escape when he's invited. Do you want to have another chat with Old Man Muller ? If not, get out of the window and come downstairs."

It was rattled off at a rate that left Anthony gasping, and at the end of it he laughed for the first time since he had reached Southampton. The thrill of the adventure had come back, and he decided that he could not be worse off elsewhere than he was now.

" I'll come," said Anthony.

"Don't tread on my hands," instructed the man outside the window, and the next moment Anthony was following him down the ladder as fast as he could, to land at the bottom in the middle of a very prickly rosebush.

There were sounds of argument from the back door of the house, and evidently the tramp who had been given half a crown was busy earning his money. Anthony picked a thorn out of his ankle and looked at his rescuer in the light from a street lamp.

"I'm very grateful," he began.

The man opposite him was short and lightly built, and even in the semi-darkness his suit gave the impression of perfect tailoring. He nodded shortly.

"We'll keep the thanks till later," he said. "At the moment, you'd better help me return this ladder."

Anthony picked up one end, and they ran it out of the front garden and up the path next door to where the builders had left it beside the unfinished garage. It was as they were coming back to the road again that they heard the slam of a door and a shambling figure appeared on the far side of the hedge.

"So Friedrich has got tired of chatting, and he'll probably go straight upstairs to make sure you're all right," said Anthony's rescuer. "We'd better run;" and without another word he set off at top speed down the street towards a side turning.

There, inconspicuously parked outside a house and looking as if it had been left there by a visitor, was a small two-seater.

"Get inside," he continued, leaping into the driving seat, and almost before Anthony could follow him he had pressed the self-starter and they were off.

It seemed to Anthony that he had seen more of Southampton in the last few hours than the average resident of that city would do in his whole life The little car dodged in and out of the traffic, nosed its way round the Bar, and took a turning to the right. It came to a stop, and Anthony congratulated himself on having climbed down that ladder. They had drawn up outside an hotel of such solid respectability that it was obvious he was at last in honest company.

It was exactly five hours since he had alighted from the bus beside the Civic Centre, and his companion glanced at his watch.

" Midnight—but as I'm staying here we can get some beer," he said surprisingly. " Let's go inside."

He led the way into the vestibule, and spoke to a night porter who emerged from behind the counter in the hall. " My friend and I have been housebreaking, and it is thirsty work. Please put the light on in the coffee-room, and bring us ale in the largest jug you can find and as many sandwiches as you care to cut."

It all seemed like a dream. Ten minutes later Anthony was installed opposite his rescuer in a comfortable arm-chair, a tankard of beer in one hand and a plate of sandwiches at his elbow. His companion nodded solemnly, drained his tankard, sighed, replenished it, and spoke.

" There's more beer when you want it. And now, Mr. Alfred-Wheeler-Anthony-Wayne, let's have your story."

It was almost the same invitation that had been given to him earlier by Dr. Muller, but this time Anthony felt inclined to talk, though he wanted to know a little more before he answered.

" Are you Our Special Crime Reporter," he asked, " or is it merely curiosity ? "

His rescuer evidently acknowledged the fairness of the question. " My name, if it will bring you any reassurance, is George Butler," he answered, " Captain Butler, late of the Royal Engineers, but now on Special Duty."

He thumped his tankard vehemently on the table. " Special Duty. If this were a Super Attraction at your local cinema, I should tell you that my immediate superior has an eye like a hawk, that he occupies rooms above a stationer's shop not a stone's throw from Piccadilly, and that he can only be approached by those who climb the staircase on their hands while singing Rule Britannia backwards. I should also tell you that I am Number 77; but actually my chief clocks in at his office every morning like any other civil servant, and the only numbers I possess are on my car and telephone. In spite of our prosaic ways, however, you seem to have got mixed up in something that is right up our street."

" You—you mean you belong to the Secret Service ? " queried Anthony.

Butler nodded. " I belong to that which is described by journalists and writers of sensational fiction as the Secret Service. In other words, it's my job, and that of a couple of hundred other men, to keep an eye on my country's enemies. Just at present your old friend Dr. Muller is looming large upon our list, and that's how I met you. I came down to Southampton to attend the meeting of the Friends of Peace; and when you blew in hotly pursued by the minions of the law I rather guessed your real identity. And afterwards, when I was waiting to follow Muller's car, I saw you sitting in it together as if you were old school chums."

Anthony had pulled out his pipe, and Butler pushed a pouch across the table.

" I must confess that, noting the friendliness, I thought some very unkind things about you. It wasn't until I was listening under the window and heard your little chat with Muller about rubber clubs that my opinion changed. I waited till Muller and his handsome pal Max had gone off to pay a visit, caught a passing tramp and bribed him with half a crown which you have not yet repaid me, and you know the rest. Before we go to bed, I want you to tell me everything you can about Stephen Hayward's murder, the reason for it, and who did it."

" There isn't much I can say that isn't in the papers," protested Anthony.

" The bits that aren't in the papers are the bits I want," said Butler. " For instance, I feel that Muller had more to do with the knifing than he would care to acknowledge, and except as a peace-seeker the papers never mention him. And who helped you to get away from Rose Cottage ? There are rumours about a girl, and I want the whole story."

The mention of Monica brought Anthony back to caution. " There's nothing to tell," he repeated, and paused a moment.

" You really think that Muller is mixed up with the murder ? "

" If you ask me, Muller is the man who arranged the whole business," declared Butler, and with sudden decision Anthony finished his beer and began to talk.

" I'll tell you everything. There are a lot of points that Monica—that is, a girl I'll mention later—and I didn't understand; and I was going to try to dodge the police and solve them on my own. If you can help, we'd be eternally grateful."

" My telegraphic address is Helpful, London," answered Butler encouragingly, and after a pause to marshal all his facts, Anthony began to tell his tale. . . .

It was an hour later when he finished talking. The pile of sandwiches had disappeared, the room was a haze of tobacco smoke, and Butler had waked the night porter again and told him to refill the jug of beer. Anthony brought his story to the moment when the ladder had appeared at the bedroom window, and sat back in his chair.

" You know the rest," he ended. " And now what do you think about it all ? "

" I think that if ever I'm suspected of murder I hope that some girl half as plucky as Monica Hayward will turn up to help me," answered Butler.

He grinned suddenly. " From your description, her appearance alone is enough to make a man forget a dozen corpses. And seriously, if she hadn't given you the advice she did, and if you hadn't taken it, I believe that very shortly you'd have been sitting in the condemned cell."

" Do you think I stand any chance of reaching Nuremberg and finding out anything about Stephen's murderers ? " asked Anthony.

" Left to yourself, you hadn't any chance at all," said Butler. " As it is, you blundered right into Muller's meeting and forced him to show a lot more of his hand that he wanted, and I think we can see light."

He sat back in his arm-chair with a pipe gripped between his teeth and his twinkling blue eyes fixed upon his visitor, and Anthony felt his spirits rising.

" Did you say ' we ' ? " he queried.

" The department to which I belong, and which sensation mongers insist on calling the Secret Service," replied Butler, " has been keeping an eye on Muller for a very long time. He's had a habit of disappearing for months on end, and, except that it isn't Holland, we don't know where he gets to. He's a Continental organiser of the Friends of Peace, though, and we have an idea that a very respectable and meritorious organisation has fallen into bad hands."

He paused. " You banked on Muller having sympathy for an agitator in the armaments industry, and you were absolutely right. At first the Friends of Peace were as honest as any of the other big pacifist organisations; but lately the elements I mentioned have got control, and they have instigated strikes in our vital industries which slow down our rearming and so, they maintain, will help to prevent war. That wouldn't be so serious when you realise that Muller's done the same all over Europe and even in Germany; but we happen to know that whereas only important British industries have been affected, the three strikes in Germany were at factories producing obsolete material that in any case was due for replacement by a newer type. In other words, we have suffered badly, and German production hasn't suffered at all.

" That's too big a coincidence for my department to miss. We're watching Muller closely; and if your friend Stephen had found out anything about him, he's not the sort of man to stop at murder in order to hush things up. He's certainly no more Dutch than I am, and the last man who seemed to be getting near his real identity was drowned in the Loire after he'd been visiting France to talk to certain of the Friends of Peace."

" But—why are we wasting time ? " cried Anthony.

He jumped up and paced about the room. " Muller gave himself away badly when he tried to make me prisoner. Why can't we catch the blighter and make him talk ? "

" And find ourselves doing six months without the option for assault and battery ? " queried Butler. " We may have our own ideas, but they're not evidence, you know."

He was suddenly very grave. " Have you realised that war between this country and Germany is inevitable ? It may come this month or it may not come this year, but unless a miracle happens it is bound to come at last. Consider the position. The Nazi Government is a gang of hoodlums who have raised mere racketeering into a science, and Hitler has perjured himself so often that if at this moment he were to offer me a non-aggression pact I should dive into a dugout and cover myself with sandbags. That's the lot we're up against, and sooner or later they're bound to invade Poland and we shall have to fight.

" It's been coming for a long time. Hitler may have a dozen moves that he could make, and we have an answer ready for every one of them; but suppose there's a thirteenth move we've never even guessed at, and which would find us unprepared ? "

The hotel was absolutely silent. The night air seemed suddenly to have turned chilly, and Anthony shivered. Butler's voice went on.

" That's why we've got to go very carefully. It may be that very thirteenth move that Stephen guessed at, and if so it means that Muller can lead us to our clue. The future of our country and the lives of thousands of Britons may hang on our ability to find out what he knew."

"I'll get through to Monica's uncle, then, and go to Nuremberg," suggested Anthony. "We've got something to work on there, and if Muller guesses where I'm going he might give himself away."

"We can manage better than by worrying anybody outside this room," Butler pointed out. "My department has its own methods of getting people abroad, and we can go together. Until England introduces prohibition and so makes life not worth living, however, we won't advertise our presence to Muller. He plays rough."

Anthony had sunk into a chair again, and Butler went over to the door.

"You stay where you are. I'm going to ring up Miss Hayward's uncle and tell him that he won't be needed after all."

He grinned at the look of disappointment on Anthony's face. "You'd like to speak to Miss Hayward yourself? She'll have been in bed hours ago. What did you say is the telephone number?"

"Beaulieu 77347," answered Anthony with a wry smile; and the next moment he was alone.

There were bigger things involved than he had guessed at first. It was, of course, no news to Anthony that war was imminent. An intelligent child could guess it after looking at a newspaper. Great Britain was methodically preparing, but this suggestion of a thirteenth move that might take her unawares was most disquieting. It would mean the upsetting of all her plans, if not the breakdown of her defences, and, thinking it over, Anthony was very thankful that he had not to play a lone hand any longer.

Butler's help meant that he stood a better chance, and it meant also that Monica would run no more risks. At the thought that he might be able to clear himself and come back to her with a clean slate, Anthony swore that he would find the truth if it meant breaking Muller's neck.

Captain Butler was a man to inspire confidence. Anthony had referred to the secret service in several of his novels, and from Butler's description it was far less theatrical than he had imagined, but he had a feeling that when it came to efficiency it would take a lot of beating. Anthony suddenly realised that he was very tired; and then the door opened and Butler came back into the room.

The first glance at his face showed that something had put him out.

" I've had a talk with Uncle, and after his first annoyance at being waked from his beauty sleep he was rather relieved you didn't need him," he announced.

" And Monica ? " asked Anthony.

Butler came over to the empty fireplace. " Miss Hayward has stolen a march on us. She flew to Dover, caught the afternoon boat to Ostend and the Ostend-Vienna express, and will be in Nuremberg in time for breakfast."

" You mean she's gone alone ? " cried Anthony.

He beat his hand upon the table. " What did you tell her uncle ? God knows what will happen if Muller catches her. I must follow her at once ! "

" I'll ring up my department to keep an eye on Muller, and Miss Hayward's uncle had better not be worried," pointed out Butler. " Our best hope is to fly to Nuremberg to-morrow; so I'll make arrangements for a new passport for you to-night."

The hall porter was watching them through the doorway, and Butler signalled to him.

" You'd better go to bed. If you don't get some sleep you'll be completely laid out by the morning, and we're going to have a busy day."

It was long past one o'clock, and Anthony realised that he was right. At this rate he would be fit for nothing in a few more days.

"Can I get a room?" he asked.

"You can have mine; I shan't be needing it," answered Butler, and ten minutes later, while his guest undressed, he was ringing a telephone number in Whitehall that is answered immediately at any time of the day or night.

But although Anthony lay in bed, his tired brain refused to give him sleep. He thought of Monica as he had first seen her in the light from his cottage door, with a smile on her lips and the curls coming from under the brim of her hat. He remembered Stephen's sprawled figure and the first realisation of what the murder meant, and he shuddered involuntarily as he thought of Muller's cold eyes behind those blank, round spectacles and of a secret move that would catch England unawares.

Why had Monica gone to Nuremberg alone? If Stephen's enemies caught her there it would be fatal. And yet perhaps people were not so easy to catch as it appeared. The Clarion Grocery Store, blue flat caps of policemen, a chairman whose eloquence died away when searchers came into the hall. . . .

"I wonder what Muller said when he came back to find me gone," thought Anthony with a last effort, and the next moment he was asleep.

At the very moment when Muller, who had not wasted time saying anything and who had merely docketed Friedrich's incompetence for future reference and action, was sitting impatiently in his big black saloon as it waited before the closed level-crossing gates at Sunningdale. Butler, having finished his telephoning, had driven out again to that little knot of Victorian houses beyond the Shirley Road to meet the agent who he had arranged would take up Muller's trail, and they had found their quarry flown and not a sign in the empty house to show that anyone had ever been there.

A goods train clanked past, the level-crossing gates swung open, and Muller's chauffeur let in his clutch so that the big car gathered speed with a leap and roared across the metals. Friedrich, huddled beside him so that his face scarcely showed above the upturned coat collar, remembered Muller's expression when he had last looked at him, and was afraid.

" A nuisance, my dear Max, that Friedrich is a blunderer," said Dr. Muller softly in the back seat of the car. " I have a feeling, however, that now Mr. Wayne has escaped he will scarcely want to trouble us again."

" The man ought to have been shot out of hand. How can we tell how much he knows ? " growled Max.

" You will leave all decisions, Max, to me," retorted Muller sharply, and the car sped on in silence.

A gleam of headlights, and they had met a car travelling in the opposite direction. The dim twinkle of a rearlight, and they slowed down to wait for an opportunity to pass a milk lorry on its way to London. The big black saloon swept through Egham and Staines, the beam of its headlights picking out the white parapet of the bridge across the Thames, and running along the Great West Road turned into the North Circular Road and skirted London. The world was still asleep as they left the town behind them again at Woodford and later took the bypass avoiding

Colchester; but as they came into Ipswich milkmen were beginning their rounds and the streets were lit with early morning sunshine.

They went on at a sober pace through the winding High Street of Woodbridge, and beyond the town took a sharp turn to the right to pass over the bridge that spans the tidal river Deben. They had come to a corner of Suffolk that seems as old as the barrows scattered on its heaths; a land of ling that, but for the rows of saplings planted by the Forestry Commission, has scarcely altered since the ancient Britons chipped the flints they quarried not so far away. The car passed a church surrounded by huddled cottages and at last reached its destination.

Here, in this wilderness of sand and chalk and pine trees, stood a township of chalets that showed an open window here and there as the inhabitants awoke to start another day. Known to local folk as The Settlement, it was a camp for refugees from Europe who needed training in new handicrafts before they were fitted to earn their living overseas. The main building of the colony, that served also as office and headquarters, had a polished brass plate beside its door.

THE FRIENDS OF PEACE

The chauffeur brought the car to a halt outside the small front garden, and Muller gave a nod of satisfaction.

" An excellent idea, Max, if you have a man whose presence in Germany might lead to awkward questions, to take him to England where the authorities show such pleasant trustfulness in human nature."

He leaned forward. " They are awake, I see. Friedrich, ring the bell."

Inside the chalet, his arrival was the subject of surprised interest. Few cars pass that way on business, and Richard Mortimer, who was on his hands and knees tending the stove while his wife cooked breakfast, rose to his feet and went across to the window.

He was one of the thousands of workers for the Friends of Peace who asked nothing save to do the most good in the least obtrusive way, and his time was very full. For a moment it seemed he did not welcome the intrusion, but as he saw who was the chief occupant of the car his brow cleared.

" Helen, it's Dr. Muller."

" I'll cook some more bacon," answered his wife practically, and Richard went to the door and opened it to a visitor who was once again the benevolent peace-seeker of the Southampton public hall. He was, too, full of apologies for his intrusion that, coming from the Continental Organiser of the Friends of Peace, filled Richard with pleasant embarrassment.

" You will have breakfast with us, Dr. Muller ? " he pressed.

" It is very kind of you to let us tax your hospitality like this," purred Dr. Muller; and it was not until he and Max were seated at table with the Mortimers, eating eggs and bacon accompanied by new bread and country butter, that he revealed the reason for his unexpected visit.

" Unfortunately, I must leave England, and I have an errand to discharge here first. I shall report to Headquarters your kindness to me on my unheralded visit."

Richard looked gratefully at his distinguished guest. " You will have time to inspect the Settlement, Doctor ? " he ventured.

" Alas, no," answered Dr. Muller. " I should have enjoyed nothing better, but the cause of Peace, my dear Mortimer, allows its votaries no rest."

A wistful gleam showed behind his spectacles. "I have to be in Holland by this morning at the latest. There was a young man in Southampton whom I would specially have liked to see again. He had to tear himself away, however, and I could not even wait for his return."

Max was eating with a concentration worthy of better things, and for a moment Richard glanced at him. Then he averted his eyes, and wished there were more in the Movement who were as devoted to it as Dr. Muller. Everybody knew about his work in Germany, for instance; and it would be a privilege to do anything for such a man.

"Can I get in touch with your Southampton friend for you, sir?" he asked.

"He may have changed his address, and I am afraid he would be difficult to find," said Dr. Muller.

He signalled to Max and rose to his feet. "No doubt Friedrich and my chauffeur are ready to start, and I must waste no more of your time."

A wall of the room was covered with a big plan of the settlement, with every chalet drawn to scale and marked with the names of its inhabitants. Muller went across to it and placed a finger on Chalet 26.

"This is what I came to see you about. You have a poor fellow here who suffers mentally, and I am taking him to Holland. I have discovered that he has relations there who will help him. His papers are in order, I believe?"

Dr. Muller beamed benevolently. "Shall we go and see him together? Knowing him as you do, you will be able to put at rest any fears he may have as to the journey."

They passed out between the chalets. "I don't know what we should do without you, Doctor," remarked the superintendent.

"I try to make things different," answered Doctor Muller modestly; and it was twenty minutes later when he re-entered his car, having chatted amiably with the occupant of Chalet 26 and succeeded at last in making him understand his good fortune. The newcomer sat at the back between Max and Friedrich, and from his seat beside the chauffeur Muller acknowledged the farewells of Richard Mortimer and his wife. The car glided away.

An hour after leaving the settlement, Max was sitting at the controls of the big cabin aeroplane owned by the European branch of the Friends of Peace. Behind him was Muller, and towards the tail of the machine the man from Chalet 26 was again placed as if he were between two keepers. The engine woke to life with a roar, the plane bumped over the surface of the aerodrome and took the air.

The ground staff turned away from a scene that had become stale through repetition. The plane rose into the wind, gained height and flattened out, and coming round in a steep bank swept over the aerodrome again and sped off straight as an arrow. But it did not land in Holland. Instead, it winged its way across the German frontier and on towards the Rhine.

Inside the cabin, Muller sat back with a smile and lit a fresh cigar. It was almost at the moment when they left the coast of England that Anthony Wayne woke up in the bedroom of his Southampton hotel.

CHAPTER FIVE

THERE are several ways of waking in an hotel. There is the hurried dressing in a cold room, followed by cheerless breakfast, that precedes the catching of an early train. There is the waking, long before it is time to get up, caused by the sound of carpet sweepers, that leaves the guest wishing hotels never needed cleaning; and last of all there is the luxurious rising from deep sleep to hear the chambermaid knocking at the door with morning paper and early tea. Anthony had none of these experiences. The sound of bells calling the burgesses of Southampton to early service failed to rouse him, and he woke with a start an hour later to find Butler in the room and tugging at the sheet.

" Sleeping Beauty will now be withdrawn after a record run," announced Butler cheerfully. " In other words, it's time to get up."

It was obvious from the condition of his hair that he had come straight out of a bath, and there was a drawn look under his eyes that showed he had been awake all night.

" What time is it ? " asked Anthony.

Butler went to the dressing-table and started to smear his face with shaving cream. " Just after nine, and the bathroom's down the passage. Breakfast will be served in this room at half past."

It had needed a few seconds for the memory of all that had happened to come flooding back into Anthony's mind. He sat up.

" After nine ? " he echoed. " But what about

Muller? We ought either to be watching him or half way to Nuremberg by now."

He jumped to the floor. "I'll get dressed straightaway!"

"We'll talk things over when we've finished breakfast," shouted Butler after him as he went out of the door; and it was not until they had cleared the tray of food provided by the management that he finally sat back and told Anthony what had happened.

"Muller's disappeared, and I doubt whether we should have got much out of him in any case. The man's too clever to give anything away. Your Miss Hayward was on the right lines when she suggested following up whatever her brother had found out in Germany, and as we settled last night we'll fly over and join her right away."

Anthony nodded. Flying meant action, and anything was better than sitting here talking. Besides, the thought of seeing Monica again was strangely pleasant.

"When do we start?" he asked.

"As soon as you've seen the barber," answered Butler.

He held out his cigarette case. "Don't forget that you're still wanted for murder. You'd better pull your hat well down and sit back in the car. I've spent most of the night telephoning my department; and although my chief has a certain pull with the authorities he says that the evidence against you is so strong he daren't interfere."

The words were ominous, and Anthony felt a sudden chill. "In that case, why do you want me to go to the barber?" he asked. "Can't I shave here?"

"He's a special barber," explained Butler, "and my department can help you even if we can't prove your innocence."

He paused. "London is sending you a new passport;

and although it was the small hours of Sunday morning I rang up a friend of mine in Leicester. He's Marriott, the Managing Director of Amalgamated Machinery, and he's putting a plane at our disposal. It's bringing us our credentials as one of his departmental managers and an assistant, and we're going on a buying trip to Germany. The barber is one of our men, and will give you a change of clothing. By the time he's finished with you, you'll look the Ideal Business Man."

Anthony had an impression of perfectly oiled wheels turning in a great machine.

"When do we start?" he asked.

"We start now," answered Butler, and they went down to the garage to get out his car.

Except for the necessity for privacy, it would have been almost as quick to walk. They turned into a small street off the Commercial Road, and stopped outside a small shop that was open even on a Sunday and that displayed a notice advertising the best sixpenny haircut in Southampton.

A notice, Anthony decided, that if true did Southampton very little credit. The shop also sold tobacco, and as well as the dummy cigarette cartons the window displayed some dusty bottles of hair tonic, several dead flies, and a card of foreign postage stamps. Butler pushed open the door and went up to the proprietor, who was just serving a customer.

"Shave, please," he ordered.

"Sorry, sir. Only open for tobacco and cigarettes on Sundays," answered the proprietor automatically, and then as he looked up his eyes narrowed.

"Do both you gentlemen want shaves?"

He was a fat little man with a carefully tended quiff of hair, and Anthony was surprised to hear that he spoke with a distinct cockney twang. Butler nodded.

" My friend here also wants a special shampoo," he said.

" Come this way, please," invited the proprietor, abandoning his customer, and with a shout to someone in the back regions to take over the shop he led the way through a dingy haircutting saloon and up the staircase to the room above.

It was an astonishing place to find over a hairdresser's shop in a back street of Southampton. To one side stood an orthodox barber's chair in front of a mirror, but the greater part of the space was occupied by hundreds of suits suspended neatly from hangers and giving the whole place the air of a second-hand clothes shop.

The small proprietor opened a drawer, took out scissors and a comb, and turned round with an eager look in his eyes.

" Is it a job, Captain ? " he asked.

" It is," answered Butler gravely. " Mr. Jones here is going on a trip to the Continent, and I want him made up as a business man. Fit him up from your wardrobe, and don't forget the pyjamas like you did last time."

" The silly blighter didn't rightly explain what 'e wanted, Captain," protested the proprietor indignantly; and as Butler took the only other seat he motioned Anthony to the barber's chair and looked at him with a professional eye.

" You want a big change ? "

" Enough to deceive the police," instructed Butler.

" 'Air shorter and parted the other side, altered eyebrows and a spot of discoloration on the teeth," suggested the proprietor; and with a grunt of satisfaction he took up his comb and scissors and got to work.

It was a very different Anthony who left the shop forty minutes later; and Butler, too, had changed his light grey suit for a sober garment more befitting a departmental manager of Amalgamated Machinery. They went back to the hotel, and Anthony looked at himself with interest in the bedroom mirror.

His hair was brushed differently, and his teeth discoloured as if from excessive smoking. He was dressed in a black jacket and striped trousers and was carrying a battered suitcase labelled with the mementoes of half a dozen visits to foreign hotels.

Henry Jones, it seemed, had been to the Leipzig Fair and visited other business centres in Holland, Germany and France. Inside the suitcase were packed a flannel suit, two sets of used but clean silk underwear, a sponge and a safety razor. The little barber seemed to have everything in his store, and after discussion with Butler had completed the outfit by adding a pair of red silk pyjamas and a flowered dressing-gown. The wardrobe of the assistant manager was now complete.

Anthony's own cigarette case, cuff links and wallet had been left at the barber's. Butler grinned and threw him a small parcel.

" There are your credentials, and if you're ever searched now you'll be Henry Jones down to the last stitch. Marriott doesn't overlook details."

" I shall be talking with a Leicestershire accent soon," retorted Anthony, and proceeded to stow the papers in his pockets. There was a brand-new passport, some letters addressed to Amalgamated Machinery, Leicester, for the attention of Mr. Jones, a fixture list of the Leicestershire Cricket Club with the results added in pencil, and a receipted bill from a Leicester coal merchant. Anthony looked at Butler.

" When do we start ? "

" As soon as you've joined the Friends of Peace," answered Butler, and put in his buttonhole a badge consisting of a white enamel dove in a blue circle.

" We shall get in touch with Monica straight away ? " persisted Anthony.

" That's why we're going," said Butler, and they went downstairs to take a taxi to the airport and to their plane.

The fact that during the flight Butler insisted on keeping the conversation to the business prospects of their trip, and read at intervals a magazine entitled the *Steelworkers' Gazette* that had been sent him by Marriott, did nothing to enliven the journey, but at last they landed on the flying field at Nuremberg, and when finally they had passed the customs and their taxi drew up outside the Pegnitzhof Hotel, Anthony leaped out and looked round. For it was here, Butler had learned, that Monica had wired to book a room before leaving England.

He had not exactly hoped to see her there, sitting on the verandah, but he was undoubtedly disappointed that she was not. Common sense told him, however, that it would be unwise to dash inside and make enquiries that would immediately link her with the extremely doubtful Mr. Jones, so Anthony gave a vivid impersonation of an assistant manager helping his superior out of a taxi and left the next move to Butler.

The porter took their suitcases into the hall. " Rooms have been booked for us by Amalgamated Machinery of Leicester," said Butler to the reception clerk; and as soon as they were upstairs he dismissed the porter and sank into a chair.

"I don't know what the business magnate usually does on arriving in a strange city, but I feel like a drink."

"What's happened to Monica?" asked Anthony.

"Nuremberg is a large place, and she's probably out," answered Butler. "She'll be back for dinner."

He rose to his feet and looked out of his bedroom window on to the Station Square.

"Until we see her we'd better leave things alone. We'll wrestle with our thirst a little longer and have a look at Nuremberg. With any luck we might even meet Miss Hayward in the street."

He led the way to the lift, and spoke loudly for the benefit of any listeners.

"Might as well enjoy ourselves to-day, Jones. We've a lot to do to-morrow."

"Just as you say, sir," answered Anthony; and they went out of the hotel and past the walls into the old city itself.

It was not Anthony's first visit to Nuremberg, and that evening the attraction of its old timbered houses and the breath-taking view from the bridge across the Pegnitz for once failed to grip him. The crowds of uniforms, the raised arms and the barked "Heil Hitler" seemed out of keeping, and the town itself had the air of a shabby dowager uneasily conscious of the presence of Hitler's flashy new parade ground so near her ancient boundaries. Also, in these days when Germany cast the shadow of war all over Europe, the visitors from whom Nuremberg made half her living had departed.

"Let's go to a cinema," suggested Butler; and after turning into a restaurant for a glass of lager they entered a building of chromium metal and reinforced concrete and took their seats.

It did at least pass the time, but again as Anthony sat through films of marching youths and maidens interspersed with occasional glimpses of the Führer in heroic poses, he found that his mind was not on what he saw. He was thinking all the time of Monica, and her face rose between his eyes and the screen as he remembered what had happened to her brother Stephen and how he had fled from that very city pursued by the vengeance that overtook him in an English village.

Pray God that did not happen to Monica. They sat through the programme, went back to their hotel and when she did not appear at dinner even Butler's optimism began to fade.

" I'm going to ask whether she's here," said Anthony at last.

He looked at Butler. " After all, we're above suspicion. There's no reason why we shouldn't be her friends."

" She's bound to turn up some time," answered Butler reassuringly; and together they went across to the reception desk and Anthony spoke to the night clerk.

" Is Miss Monica Hayward staying here ? "

The clerk, a small wizened man with eyes a thought too close together, looked doubtful. He picked up a ledger and ran his finger down its pages.

" There's a Miss Hertford in number 97, if that is the lady the Herr requires," he answered.

Butler touched Anthony on the shoulder before he could say any more. " Won't do, I'm afraid, thanks," he answered lightly. " Miss Hayward's a relation of a friend of ours and we expected to meet her here. She may have decided not to come to Nuremberg after all."

" I regret I cannot answer the gentlemen's question more satisfactorily," declared the reception clerk; and as the evening dragged slowly by it became obvious that Monica must have changed her mind about staying at the Pegnitzhof.

And yet, surely, she would have let them know. A note would have been enough; and when there was no letter for Anthony next morning he and Butler drank their coffee and ate their rolls and butter and honey without appetite, and at last came to a decision.

"We shall have to get on with the job," said Butler. "What was the address Stephen Hayward stayed at while he was in Nuremberg?"

"Care of Frau Dittmer, Regentenstrasse 23," answered Anthony.

He looked at his companion eagerly. "We're going there now?"

"Miss Hayward obviously isn't in the hotel, so we'd better go and look for her," pointed out Butler.

"Let's go at once," urged Anthony; and twenty minutes later they were in the Regentenstrasse and climbing the staircase of Number 23.

If anything had been needed to bring home to Anthony the lengths to which Stephen had been ready to go for his convictions, the proof was given him now. The Regentenstrasse was in a suburb lying well out beyond the railway, and was a narrow street of tall houses that had seen better days. They were now let out in apartments, and as he and Butler picked their way through the crowd of children playing on the ground floor and climbed to the third story Anthony realised something of what the luxury-loving Stephen had been ready to endure. Frau Dittmer, too, when she opened the door of her flat, was not his idea of a perfect landlady.

"Yes?" asked Frau Dittmer curtly.

Butler raised his hat. "Is this the house where Herr

Stephen Hayward used to lodge?" he enquired.

"I have been told of the young man's death, and if you have come to make enquiries you are too late," retorted Frau Dittmer. "In any case, I have nothing to do with what happened in England and I can give you no help."

She started to close the door. "Already the police have been here, going through his papers, and I have had trouble enough."

Anthony blessed the chance which enabled him to speak German sufficiently well to follow any conversation with ease. It meant that he could take his full part in the enquiries.

"Herr Hayward was our cousin, and we have come here to settle his affairs," he said hastily. "We thought perhaps he might owe you some money."

He had spoken late, but apparently the mention of money was never too late for Frau Dittmer. She was, however, surprisingly honest.

"The Herr has paid everything," she answered regretfully. "The Fräulein who called here yesterday morning asked the same question, and I gave her the same answer."

"A Fräulein called here yesterday morning?" repeated Anthony.

"Even if the police came for Herr Hayward's papers," struck in Butler, keeping grimly to business, "they have surely left something?"

He produced a ten-mark note. "At any rate, you will let us see his rooms."

"The lady who called was Herr Hayward's sister, and the police did not leave even those things which were useless to themselves but which would have been highly useful to Herr Hayward's landlady," answered Frau Dittmer gloomily.

She stepped back from the door. " The gentlemen can see the room if it will give them any pleasure."

" It will fill us with the utmost delight," declared Butler, and passing the landlady they went into Stephen's old room.

The main impression that Anthony carried away afterwards was of the overpowering smell of stale cabbage water. There were a bed, two rickety chairs, a porcelain stove, and a chest of drawers; but although they looked in all the places where anything could be left, it was evident that the police had done their job thoroughly.

If it had really been the police. It was quick work for the Nuremberg police to have heard of the murder and taken action already, and Anthony found himself wondering whether it had not been some of Stephen's murderers making sure that nothing had been overlooked.

In any case, all clues had vanished. They searched the room with a minute care that would have been unnecessary were they merely the relations they claimed to be, and at last Anthony straightened himself and produced another ten-mark note.

" As you say, nothing has been left. If the lady comes again, will you ask her to get in touch with us at the Pegnitzhof ? "

Frau Dittmer took the money. " I will do whatever the Herren wish," she answered, and leaving the cabbage-laden atmosphere they went out into the street and stood for a moment breathing deeply.

" Eat more Fruit ! " said Butler at last. " Or, in the room we've just left, Inhale more Vegetables. Let's go for a sharp walk."

He led the way towards their hotel. " And so Miss Hayward's somewhere in Nuremberg after all."

" Where can she be if she isn't at the Pegnitzhof? " asked Anthony.

" It's my belief that cross-eyed snake of a reception clerk deceived us. I'm going back to make certain," answered Butler.

" If he was lying I'll wring his neck," said Anthony between his teeth, and it was in this mood that they re-entered the hotel and went across to the reception desk.

There was, however, no need for violence. The night clerk had gone off duty long ago, and there was another man behind the counter. Butler waited while he argued with an old lady over tickets for a motor trip to Rothenburg and answered a large American's enquiries as to the next train for Frankfurt, and finally the clerk looked their way.

" The gentlemen would like an excursion to Rothenburg or Dinkelsbühl? " he asked hopefully.

" The gentlemen are on business, and would like nothing of the sort," retorted Butler sternly. " They require some information that was denied them yesterday."

" I will answer anything within my powers," murmured the clerk.

" We come here to place enormous orders with German factories," continued Butler impressively, " and before we have been here a day we are enmeshed in a tissue of lies. Our employer asked us to meet a niece of his who is staying here on pleasure."

He indicated Anthony. " My friend asked yesterday whether the lady had arrived, and the non-Aryan imbecile of a night clerk stated that he had never heard of her."

The clerk gulped. He was shaken to the core that any member of the Pegnitzhof staff should be accused of being a non-Aryan, but he tried to force a smile.

" The—the young lady's name ? " he ventured.

Butler had done his part, and Anthony stepped forward.

" Last night your clerk told me that the lady was not in the hotel. This morning, when I rang up my London office, they said she was undoubtedly here. I demand an explanation."

He fixed the reception clerk with a steely eye. " Her name is Miss Hayward, and I want to know definitely whether she is here or not."

There was a pause that seemed like an hour. " Miss Hayward ? " echoed the clerk at last.

" I shall take the matter to the police unless you can give me a satisfactory explanation," declared Anthony, and the clerk knew he was beaten.

A family party had arrived demanding rooms, and he waved to an assistant to deal with them. He led Anthony and Butler farther along the counter and leaned over it confidentially.

" The other clerk is new and must have lost his head. It is not pleasant for an hotel when such things happen, and he may have thought . . ."

Anthony's heart suddenly seemed to stop beating. " When what things happen ? " he cried, and half reluctantly, and yet half pleased to find an audience, the clerk went on.

" Fräulein Hayward came here by the early train. She booked her room and had breakfast, and afterwards went out to look at the city. She came back to the hotel and ate her lunch, went upstairs to her room for a minute, and then it happened."

He paused dramatically, and Butler satisfied his obvious need for encouragement.

" Very interesting, laddie, but you haven't told us what it was yet," he reminded the clerk gently.

" The Fräulein was taken ill. Two doctors arrived, saying they had been called by telephone from her bedroom, and they carried her out to a taxi through this very lounge," went on the clerk. " Carried her out through all the visitors, and took her to be cared for."

Even his immaculate hair seemed to be disturbed at the memory. His gaze went from one listener to the other.

" Can you wonder that my colleague wished to hide it from you? It is not good for an hotel when such things happen."

" How is Miss Hayward, and where is she now ? " demanded Anthony.

His words restored the clerk's balance. He shook his head. " I regret, sir, that I cannot tell you. She left in a taxi, in much haste, and as her luggage remained here it was no business of ours to pester her with questions."

Butler signalled to the hotel porter. " The young lady who was taken ill yesterday," he said, and there was a military rasp in his tone that brought the man automatically to attention. " Did you hear where the taxi that took her away was going ? "

The porter's heels clicked. " I had the honour of helping the Gnädiges Fräulein into the car, sir," he answered smartly. " She was taken to Doktor Schultz, Rheinbergerstrasse 8."

The reception clerk heaved a sigh of relief. " One of our best doctors. She is in good hands," he assured them, and moved along the counter.

" You have heard enough ? Can I go to my other duties ? "

" You can go as fast and as far as you like, laddie," answered Butler, and taking Anthony by the arm he led him across the lounge to a dingy cupboard that was labelled Writing-room and pressed the bell.

" To one of my abstemious habits this is most distasteful, but the situation demands—nay, cries aloud—for drinks."

He looked at Anthony keenly. " You'll feel better after you've had a quick one, laddie. I see you've made the same guess that I have."

A waiter brought their order, and Anthony nodded. " Monica's been caught ! " he said.

" Unless we admit the possibility that she has genuinely been taken ill and that Dr. Schultz is giving her skilled attention," replied Butler.

He drained his glass. " All the same, I'm afraid I can't think so. We'll have lunch, and after that the Pegnitzhof is going to have its second mysterious illness in twenty-four hours."

Anthony began to see some glimmerings of his plan. " You mean I'd better go along to Schultz's and see if she's really there ? " he asked.

Butler shook his head. " As a man who has not yet recovered from the atmosphere at Frau Dittmer's, the task devolves on me. I'm coming over all queer already, and in half an hour I shall be ripe or over-ripe for the practitioners."

Anthony was opening his mouth to protest, but he hurried on. " I shall be back in less than an hour, and one of us has to stay here in case the whole story's leaky and Miss Hayward comes to the hotel after all. Muller and his friends know you and would be suspicious if they saw you, whereas I shouldn't be recognised even if Schultz is a crook."

There was no doubt that the last argument was unanswerable, and Anthony agreed.

" Let's have lunch, then," he said.

" A man in the lounge yesterday evening was speaking very highly of the wine list in this establishment," said Butler hopefully, and they went into the dining-room together and ordered their meal.

It required more than a good lunch and half a bottle of hock, however, to restore Anthony's spirits. Butler, who in the cause of verisimilitude had reluctantly abandoned half his meal and gone off in a hurry in a taxi, had promised to be as quick as possible, but to Anthony taking his coffee in the glass-fronted verandah of the hotel the minutes seemed to crawl.

The Station Square at Nuremberg is large, and Anthony looked dispiritedly at a group of Hitler Youth passing from the station and at a couple of official cars with Swastika pennants drawn up before the opposition hotel on the far side of the square. A gaggle of American tourists were superintending the unloading from a hired limousine of the suitcases whose labels would shortly astonish the inhabitants of Oshkosh, Wis., and turning his eyes distastefully from the scene Anthony's gaze went past the post office and came to rest on the station entrance.

There was the usual traffic of people catching or coming away from trains, and as Anthony looked a figure that seemed vaguely familiar came out of the station and stood for a moment before crossing the square. Anthony's eyes lit up, and although the distance was too great for him to be easily recognised, he moved behind the shelter of his neighbour's open newspaper.

" It can't be! " he breathed.

The newcomer left the station and strolled towards the Pegnitzhof. A tall, lean man whose face was disfigured by a sabre slash, and whose eyes seemed to move independently as he idly glanced at the passers-by.

A man whom Anthony had never expected to be pleased to see again. There was no mistaking that face anywhere, and as he realised that it was indeed Dr. Muller's secretary, Anthony slipped from his seat and made towards the street.

Max passed by carelessly within a couple of yards, and, abandoning a scarcely touched and perfectly good drink, Anthony went after him.

It was obvious that Max had a definite goal, and that he was at home in Nuremberg. He walked up the Königstrasse at a good four miles an hour, swung into the Spitalgasse and crossed the Spital Platz without a glance at Hans Sachs in stone seated on the north side of the square, and turning into the Tucherstrasse entered the maze of small streets beyond. Anthony, following cautiously, came to the third corner to find himself almost on his quarry's heels.

The street was old, like all in that part of Nuremberg, and Max was at last looking round him as he stood outside a gabled, many-storied house half way along the road. Anthony slipped into a porch; and apparently satisfied by what was no more than an instinctive precaution, Max knocked three times on the door and was admitted.

The street drowsed peacefully in the burning sunshine, but Anthony guessed that he had been led to Muller's headquarters, and from what he knew of that gentleman he had no doubt at all that the neighbourhood was not as healthy as it looked.

It might mean that he was nearing Monica at last; he was determined to stay where he was and not let Muller slip away again. A small boy came along the street and paused to gaze at the visitor who was standing hidden in a doorway, and Anthony beckoned to him.

" Do you want to earn five marks ? " he asked.

The small boy brightened. He was used to tourists, but this was something new.

"Natürlich," he answered.

Anthony produced two marks. "You can have the rest when you get back. Go to the Pegnitzhof and ask Herr Butler to come here and meet me."

His messenger was already poised to dash away, but Anthony motioned him to wait. It would be safest to give some explanation of the message in case the boy was connected in any way with Muller and happened afterwards to discuss his fortune.

"Herr Butler had arranged to meet me at the Castle, but he has been ill," improvised Anthony. "This will be nearer for him, and he may not want to walk too far."

"Heil Hitler!" answered the small boy with fervour, and the next moment he had dashed off and Anthony was alone.

Would Butler have any news of Monica when he arrived, or was this house the place where they would find an answer to the problem of her disappearance? Anthony found that he was trembling with excitement, and lighting a cigarette he settled back in the porch where he was safe from observation.

It was a baking August afternoon. A man with a basket passed by selling vegetables, a group of tourists on their way to the Pellerhaus went up the street with Baedekers in their hands and that air of eagerness to reach some new sight peculiar to the breed, the proprietor of the baker's shop opposite the house Max had entered came to his door and stood for a few minutes scanning the scene; and in almost less time than Anthony had expected there was a quick step beside him and Butler came into the porch.

"Your messenger lives on the other side of the railway, so I gave him the rest of your bribe and told him to go home to Mother," he announced. "Why this sudden anxiety for my health that made you cancel our appointment at the Castle?"

He caught sight of the expression on Anthony's face and suddenly became businesslike.

"Has anything happened?"

"I've found Muller's house!" declared Anthony, and as quickly as he could he told Butler all that had happened since Max came out of the railway station and he himself abandoned his drink to give chase.

"Not bad," commented Butler when he had heard the whole story. "We mustn't forget that Max may only be paying a social call, however. We'd better watch the place and see what happens."

"I'm getting tired of this doorway," complained Anthony.

The baker's shop farther down the road was laid out for the tourist trade. Its window contained an assortment of cakes such as are only allowed to foreigners in Nazi Germany, over the shop window gilded letters announced to the world that the Bäckerei und Konditorei was the property of Gustav Brandt, and the first-floor windows displayed net curtains through which could be discerned the shapes of little tables and gilt chairs. Butler glanced at his wrist-watch and shuddered.

"We can't stay here," he agreed, "and now is the time when all good men must suffer for their country. We will go upstairs, and, while keeping watch for Comrade Max, beguile the hours with chocolate and rich cakes. And this for a man who half an hour ago was at his doctor's!"

"Must the cakes be rich?" asked Anthony.

"Business men on trips to Germany always eat rich cakes," retorted Butler. "Did someone once tell me that the Germans make butter out of coal nowadays? I shall probably break my teeth upon a lump of slate"; and leading the way through the shop he went upstairs and chose a table that was near the window and yet screened by a large potted palm from the view of passers-by.

"My friend and I," announced Butler, approaching the counter where a buxom waitress stood behind a pile of pastries, "are tired."

He indicated a selection that would keep them busy for some time.

"With your permission we will rest here and eat these."

"The Herren are welcome," beamed the waitress; and returning to their table, Butler sat down opposite Anthony.

"To the peril of our digestions we can now see without being seen."

"What did you find out about Monica?" asked Anthony eagerly. "Is Dr. Schultz one of Muller's friends?"

"Dr. Schultz," replied Butler, "is one of Nuremberg's most respected medical men."

The little restaurant was very quiet. Had they known it, the son of the proprietor was mobilised and on the Polish frontier, and, like everyone else in this strange brooding Germany that threatened war to the whole of Europe, the proprietor himself found that his business had dwindled almost to vanishing-point. Motorised units were waiting to pounce on the Corridor, men worked feverishly on Germany's Western Wall, troops marched, aeroplanes prepared to bomb innocent Polish villages, and the sane normal life of the people was almost at an end. Beyond the water, Great Britain had declared her determination to fight and now stood firm.

Butler transferred a cake from the dish to his plate, sighed, and dug his fork into it.

" At any rate, we have this restaurant to ourselves."

He came back to the subject of his recent illness. " I was shown into Schultz's waiting-room by a nurse with a gimlet eye and an incipient moustache, and after a decent interval I was transferred to the consulting-room where I found Schultz himself, with a gimlet eye and a dark beard. I explained that I was staying at the Pegnitzhof and mentioned that his name had come to my notice through Miss Hayward's illness yesterday, and obviously Schultz did not know what I was talking about. At his pressing invitation I passed on to the symptoms of my illness."

Butler seemed to be dwelling on painful memories. " After the intimate questions that I had to answer I shall never feel that my digestive system is my own again. Dr. Schultz was on the point of telephoning for an anæsthetist and sharpening his knives when I realised the danger of my position and acted quickly. I cut short his description of the operation that would only cost two thousand marks and mean three weeks in bed, placed my fee on his desk, swerved round the nurse who tried to intercept me in the hall, and made for the open country. In future the hunted fox and I will have a fellow feeling."

He became suddenly solemn. " Schultz knows nothing whatever about what happened at the Pegnitzhof and he has no assistant who might have acted for him. We might have guessed that no real doctor would put his patient in a taxi, and Schultz himself is absolutely above suspicion."

Anthony felt depressed. They were, it seemed, as far from finding Monica as ever.

"Then what are we going to do next?" he asked.

"Keep an eye on the door opposite," answered Butler. "Muller's our chief suspect; and if you're right and that's his house I've no doubt at all that Miss Hayward's a prisoner inside it."

The situation seemed incredible. Anthony looked round the commonplace little restaurant, and it was unthinkable that Monica could be divided from them only by that narrow street.

"Can't we tell the police?" he suggested.

"Our own characters won't bear too much enquiry, and for all we know the chief of police may be a friend of Muller's," pointed out Butler. "There's nothing to do at the moment but eat another cake and watch."

He sat forward suddenly. "Look who's coming out of the house!"

Anthony peered through the dusty curtains. "Muller!" he said.

Muller was dressed in a brown lounge suit, and smoking a cigar. He paused for a moment before moving down the street, and Butler leaped to his feet.

"You stay here, and I'll follow him," he instructed. "I'll try to come back here, but if anything keeps me we'll meet somewhere else. There's a little place, Winkler's, in the Wine Market, and I'll be there any time between nine o'clock and midnight."

He went rapidly across the room, explained to the waitress that his friend would pay the bill, and went downstairs. Anthony saw the top of his head as he reached the pavement, and then he went after Muller who was strolling casually towards the corner.

Anthony ordered another cup of chocolate and settled down to watch the house opposite until Butler came back.

CHAPTER SIX

BUTLER was so obviously the right man to trail Muller that Anthony felt no regret at leaving it to him. In any case, the thought of Monica, a prisoner in the house opposite, made him forget all larger issues, and he was determined to stay near her even if he could do nothing else. The dusty little restaurant gradually began to fill up, but he remained doggedly at his post, earning the admiration of the waitress by the persistence with which he ordered fresh food as soon as he had finished the last consignment. The hours of waiting were to remain for ever imprinted on Anthony's mind.

There is a limit to the time one can take in eating a cream puff, and the palm beside him became a useful repository for unwanted cakes. The few trippers who had put down their guide-books and cameras while they took refreshment and asked the waitress the quickest way to the German Museum went off invigorated to see new sights, but Anthony stayed where he was and began to wonder if he were there for life.

The windows of the house on the far side of the road were obstinately blank. Anthony wondered what time the restaurant closed, and taking the fixture card of the Leicestershire Cricket Club out of his pocket, tried to interest himself in the results of the June matches. He looked up at the sound of a man running down the street.

He was a man in rough workman's clothes, and arriving breathlessly at the green-painted door of Muller's headquarters he beat frantically on the knocker. The door was opened by someone Anthony could not see, and the man delivered a message and pelted away again in the direction whence he had come.

It was the most interesting thing that had happened yet, and Anthony put away his fixture card and leaned sideways so as to have a better view of the house and at the same time be hidden behind the potted palm. The door opened again, and Anthony held his breath.

Max came down the steps into the street, and he was not alone. He had with him a man in a yellow suit, and another whom Anthony recognised as the chauffeur he had last seen—years ago, it seemed—in the respectable house Muller had rented in the suburbs of Southampton. They hurried off together in the direction taken by the messenger, and as he watched them Anthony had an idea.

Butler might not come back at all, and if he sat watching the house opposite any longer he might find out nothing more until he died of old age or dyspepsia caused by eating too-rich cakes. And all the time Monica was no nearer safety. The staff on the far side of the street was now depleted by Muller and three other men, and unless there were a far larger garrison than was likely Anthony would never have a better chance of getting into the house. He would go across and try to rescue Monica, and in his present mood he felt ready to fight the whole population, a step which, however, he hoped would not be necessary.

The restaurant was empty and the waitress had gone downstairs on some errand of her own, and for the moment Anthony had the place to himself. He got up and walked lightly across the room.

The proprietor of the bakery, evidently a patriot, had decorated the far wall of his restaurant with a large poster demanding the return of German colonies.

More important still, he had reinforced the appeal by a trophy of native weapons emerging from a shield. Anthony picked out a knobkerry made of some dark wood, dusted it on a tablecloth and, slipping it under his coat, strode to the staircase and called for the waitress and his bill. It came to a sum that did his appetite credit, and after he had settled it Anthony went through the shop on the ground floor and out into the street. It was as he came into the sudden blaze of sunshine that he had his second stroke of luck that day.

He was about to walk across and bang the knocker on the green-painted door, when a car came into the street and drew up outside the house. The driver got out and rang, and the bell was anwered by a member of the staff. The driver handed over a note and went away, and after the car had driven off the man stood for a moment in the doorway looking at the street.

A smallish man in uniform, whose lack of size was more than counterbalanced by the holster at his belt. Anthony stepped forward as the car turned the corner and, putting a businesslike ring into his voice, tried to look as if he were an expected guest.

" Is the Doctor in ? "

" He's out," answered the man, making no effort to move out of the doorway.

Anthony clicked his tongue in an irritated manner. " I'll have to write a message for him, then. Let me inside."

It was important to get out of sight of the street before he really started arguing with the doorman, and Anthony tried to jostle the fellow out of his path.

" Get a move on, can't you ? It's urgent."

" Urgent or not," replied the other, still refusing to give way, " I've orders to let nobody in here."

It was irritating in the extreme. The precious minutes were passing; Muller might be coming back already and Anthony could do nothing violent. He drew a bow at a venture.

" I come from the Friends of Peace," he said, and indicated the badge that Butler had put in his buttonhole when he first took up his position with Amalgamated Machinery. The doorman looked at the badge, gazed with sudden interest into Anthony's face, and when he spoke again it was in a new tone altogether.

" I'm sorry, sir. I didn't recognise you. Won't you step inside? "

He was standing in the entrance to the narrow, stone-flagged hallway, and he moved out of Anthony's way.

" It's against orders, but if you'll be so kind as to close the door behind you . . ."

The doorman's voice rose slightly on the last words, and it may have been that that roused Anthony's suspicions. He had turned to close the door behind him, and as the latch clicked he swung round again as lightly as a boxer, with a sudden presentiment that all was not well.

The other man was looking at him with a light of triumph in his eyes. " Verdammt Engländer! " he snarled.

The words warned Anthony an instant too soon. The man's hand was on his unbuttoned holster as he spoke, but before he could pull out his gun Anthony had acted.

He was still gripping the handle of his knobkerry, and almost to Anthony's surprise it came clear in a single movement without catching in his coat. The whole thing worked as smoothly as if he had rehearsed it a hundred times.

The man jerked up a dull blue automatic. " Sorry! "

said Anthony pleasantly, and swinging the knobkerry cleanly through the air he brought it round on his adversary's head with a crash.

There was a dull crack and the man swayed backwards. Anthony caught him before he could clatter to the floor and warn the house, and holding him for a moment looked swiftly round the hall. The doorman's cap had taken part of the blow, but from the weight sagging in his arms Anthony guessed it would be a long time before he recovered consciousness.

There was a sound of movement from a room at the back of the house, and a smell of cooking seemed to mark it as the kitchen. A man's baritone softly hummed the Horst Wessel Lied; and, realising that there was no time to waste, Anthony made up his mind. On the left of the front door was a tall cupboard, and Anthony opened it and thrust his late opponent inside, at the same time relieving him of his gun. He kicked the letter the man had been holding under a rug.

It would be as well, Anthony decided, to leave the knobkerry behind also. A weapon that would excite little or no comment in the wilds of Africa is distinctly out of place in Nuremberg, and as it had done its work Anthony averted his eyes from his late antagonist and thrust it beneath a shelf in the darkest corner of the cupboard. He closed the door and moved towards the stairs.

The position was worse than he had thought. Muller had evidently guessed that he was being followed, and it was galling to think that even after he had been disguised the doorkeeper could recognise Anthony from what had probably been nothing more than a verbal description. The fact that Muller was suspicious, however, made Monica's rescue the more urgent.

Anthony was feeling rather sick, but the thought of Monica steadied him and kept him on his feet. Very cautiously, and praying that the ancient treads would not creak beneath his weight, he started to climb the staircase.

It might have been the sound of his movements or the slight noise made by closing the cupboard door, but the humming in the kitchen stopped temporarily while Anthony stood breathless. Then, as it was resumed, he crept on and arrived at a landing that had three doors on either side and was lit by a window overlooking the street.

Monica might be in any of the rooms, or any of them might contain a man who was quicker on the draw than the doorman. Anthony wished that one of those doors could speak, so that he would not have to risk opening the lot.

On one side of the landing was a row of empty keyholes, but on the other side the middle room had a key projecting on the outside of the door. The lock, too, was new and of the Yale type, while all the others were massive relics that seemed to be almost as old as the house itself.

A man does not leave a key outside a door unless there is someone or something he wants to keep inside the room, and Anthony decided to take a chance. Holding his automatic well to the fore, he went along the passage as quietly as possible and unlocked the door.

It opened into a small room with a window that looked on to a blank wall. There was a bedstead, garish wallpaper that showed bright patches where the pictures had once hung, and then, as Anthony went in, he was conscious of Monica getting up from a chair on the far side of the room and looking at him with eyes that were full of alarm that changed to sudden gladness.

She was hatless, so that her hair gleamed in the sunshine that poured through the window, and dressed in a blue jumper and skirt. Since they had parted Anthony had often tried to imagine what it would be like when he again met Stephen's sister, the girl he had only seen for a few short hours since he remembered her almost as a child at Oxford. The reality was very different from anything he had imagined.

" Anthony! " cried Monica, a note of gladness in her voice.

" I've come to get you away," said Anthony, closing the door behind him and slipping the automatic into his pocket; and the next moment everything else was forgotten and he was holding her in his arms.

For a minute Monica clung closely to him, and then she had pushed him to arms' length and was looking up anxiously into his face.

" Are you all right? "

" Perfectly," Anthony assured her. " There was a slight argument with the fellow at the entrance, but he was the one to wish we had never met."

Monica sighed with relief. " I guessed that you would come here, and I've been afraid of what would happen. Someone must be in Muller's pay at the Pegnitzhof, for he told me that you were in Nuremberg and that he'd soon lay hands on you."

She paused. " I've been a failure. Two men knocked at my bedroom door yesterday and forced their way in. They must have managed to dope me, for I didn't know anything else until I woke up here."

" And before you know much more you'll be safe outside again," said Anthony reassuringly.

It explained a lot if the shifty-eyed reception clerk was in Muller's pay. It made it clear why the doorkeeper had invited Anthony inside and then tried to take him prisoner, and Anthony wondered whether Butler would be recognised by Muller. From what he knew of Butler's methods, he was not inclined to worry.

"Hadn't we better get away quickly?" suggested Monica anxiously, and her words roused Anthony from his thoughts and struck him as the best advice he had heard for a long time. He went across and cautiously opened the door, and peering along the passage was relieved to find that everything was quiet. It was evident that the doorkeeper was still safely in the cupboard.

"Muller's got another prisoner," whispered Monica. "A huge man dressed like a peasant, who managed to get out yesterday and came into my room. I—I think he's mad, and I could hardly understand what he was trying to say."

"Mad or not, he'll have to stay where he is. We've got ourselves to think of," answered Anthony grimly.

The man in the kitchen was now singing snatches from Faust in a robust voice, and the sound gave them confidence. They tiptoed along the passage, and Anthony was just reaching out a cautious foot for the stairs when there was an interruption that brought them to a stop.

A car halted outside with a screech of brakes, there was a sound of footsteps on the paving stones, and someone banged on the knocker. The singing ceased, and there was a moment's silence.

"Somebody's coming," said Anthony unnecessarily.

He went very quietly to the window overlooking the street and drew in his breath.

"We look like having trouble."

Monica had followed him, and instinctively he stood between her and the panes. Standing in the street opposite the doorway was a big touring car with a swastika pennant fluttering from its radiator cap, and out of it had got three men in black S.S. uniform. Even as Anthony watched, the leading S.S. man raised his hand again and thundered on the knocker.

The chauffeur of the car lit a cigarette, and again there was a brooding silence which was broken by the man in the kitchen. He came into the passage and raised his voice.

" Adolf ! "

Anthony and Monica had backed away from the window, and as they crouched in the shelter of the banisters they could see him in the hall below. A stout man with a red face, dressed in a chef's tall cap and white coat and apron.

" Adolf ! " he repeated in a louder tone, and then went across the hall, grumbling as he did so. " Trust him to get away if there's any work to do. He's teasing that fellow on the top floor, I suppose. He'll catch it if the Doctor finds out."

The chef swung open the green-painted front door and stood blinking in the sunlight.

" What do you want ? "

" Is Dr. Muller in ? " asked the leading S.S. man, coming into the hall.

" He had to go out, and Friedrich and Herr Max are out, too," replied the chef. " Adolf's upstairs talking to the loony, so I'm all alone with the food spoiling. Are you coming in to wait ? "

" You don't think we're going to stand outside, do you ? " retorted the S.S. man, and Anthony waited breathlessly for the party to go into one of the rooms and shut the door, so that he and Monica could try to get downstairs. Even then there would be the chauffeur in the car outside to deal with, but once in the sunlit street it was difficult to believe that they could be in any danger. He found that he was unconsciously holding Monica's hand, and his grip tightened as the man below him spoke again.

The three S.S. men stood in an undecided group in the passage, and their leader threw his cap impatiently on to a chest beside the door.

" I'll ring up to say we're detained," he decided curtly; and to Anthony's horror he went straight to the cupboard where the unconscious Adolf lay hidden. Out of all possible places Anthony had chosen the one spot in the house where Muller kept his telephone.

The S.S. man was speaking to his comrades and his head was turned towards the hall, and it was not until the cupboard door was fully open that he saw what was inside. Then he let go of the handle and started back.

" Gott in Himmel! " he said in a husky whisper.

The cook's voice was a high-pitched squeak. " It's —it's Adolf! " he cried, and swinging round to the black-uniformed men beside him, he wrung his hands and babbled in sheer terror.

" It's the loony! Adolf teased him when he took up his food yesterday, and the man's a giant. If he's got loose, he'll kill some more of us."

" Adolf isn't dead, you fool," snarled one of the men.

They were a strange group, standing in the flagged passage round the inert figure of the doorkeeper. The leader suddenly swung round and flung open the door.

" Drive anywhere you like and come back in half an hour! " he bawled to the driver of the car, and coming inside again shut the door and mopped his brow.

" A good thing I remembered him. If there's a scandal and we're found here . . ."

He took command of the startled group. "Your lunatic be damned. How do you know this wasn't done by an outsider?"

"Adolf went up ten minutes ago to see he was all right, and we had strict instructions to let nobody into the house. I should have heard if anyone had opened the door, too. It's him all right."

The leader of the S.S. men turned away with a gesture of impatience. "Follow me!" he ordered; and, leaving one of his men behind him, he and the others started up the stairs so suddenly that Anthony had only just time to pull Monica inside the room where she had been imprisoned and close the door again before they reached the landing. Holding their breath, they heard the heavy footsteps clatter past them and up the second flight.

"He's locked up on the third floor," whispered Monica, and, thankful for the short respite it would give them, Anthony thought out their next move.

The cook and one S.S. man were downstairs, and it would be no use trying to get past them. If they could be drawn away while the others were still upstairs, however, he and Monica might still have a chance. The window of the room looked out, as has been said, on to a narrow passage, and Anthony flung open the casement and went across to the washstand. On it stood a massive china jug and basin, and Anthony heaved up the jug and with a single movement sent it flying through the window to break with a hideous clatter on the flags beneath. The men upstairs might not notice it, but on the ground level it would be as startling as the explosion of a bomb. He opened the door again and went on to the landing.

His scheme had been only partially successful. The S.S. man had disappeared to see what was happening, but the cook preferred to get as far away as possible from any danger and was rushing up the stairs. As Anthony emerged he bounded on to the landing.

It was all over in a second. The cook's face turned as white as his apron and he let out an unearthly yell, and almost in the same instant Anthony's fist crashed into the point of his chin and he collapsed to the floor. Monica was already making for the staircase, but the men above had been warned by the cry and she was too late.

They had evidently found that the lunatic was safely locked in his room, and the leader of the S.S. men came charging down the stairs with a revolver in his hand.

" Halt! " he shouted.

The man did not fire, however, and the fact gave Anthony confidence. He remembered what had been said about a scandal, and realised that there must be no shooting for fear of bringing in the police. And if Muller, too, was outside the law, things were a little more hopeful for them.

" Halt yourself! " he retorted. The man could reach the head of the stairs before they did, and there was no escape from the room they had just left, but Monica ended Anthony's momentary hesitation with a hurried whisper.

" Try the back."

" The very thing! " cried Anthony, and the next moment they were in the back room and Monica was turning the key in the lock while Anthony strained at the bed to push it across the door.

It was a room very much like the one they had just left, but the window looked straight out of the back of the house across a yard littered with cases and bounded by a wall that evidently gave on to another street. And below the window was an outhouse with a lean-to roof.

Monica's eyes were sparkling, and as she looked at Anthony there was the ghost of a smile upon her lips.

" We've done it! " she said.

The S.S. men on the landing were kicking at the door, and one of its panels gave way with a loud splintering noise. " We needn't wait for them," Anthony told her, and helping Monica out on to the roof he scrambled after her and they both dropped to the ground.

With Monica leading, they picked their way through the rubbish to the far wall, which was broken only by a locked door. Anthony pulled over a dustbin and Monica scrambled up on to it. On the far side of the wall was a narrow alley, and blessing the fact that there was nobody to witness their unorthodox exit Monica dropped to the ground on the far side while Anthony still straddled the wall.

He glanced back. The leader of the S.S. men, who had apparently not thought of running down the stairs to cut them off, had just broken into the room they had left and was tumbling out on to the outhouse roof. Anthony caught his eye, placed his thumb to his nose in a universal gesture of contempt, and joined Monica in the alley. Hand in hand they sped away.

The S.S. man's head appeared over the wall as they were rounding the corner, and as they came into a more populous street they lessened their pace to a decorous but fast walk.

Another corner, and they found themselves in the Egidienplatz. A policeman strolled past them, an official car was parked outside an office, and in spite of his feeling that his adversaries dared not call attention to themselves, Anthony's confidence began to ooze away. After all, he and Monica were alone in a foreign city, and to make it worse he was a wanted murderer who was travelling with false papers. His character would not bear investigation if he were mixed up in any scene.

Not far from the Pellerhaus stood a battered taxi, its driver seated at the wheel, and as Anthony and Monica approached he sat up in his seat with an attempt at smartness. He had the air of a man who had been rebuffed many times that day.

" Drive round the city, sir ? " he asked.

" There's nothing we'd like better. Get going," commanded Anthony; and almost before they were inside the taxi the engine spluttered into life and they were rattling off, with the house of the green-painted door receding farther into the distance every minute.

" What do we do now ? " demanded Monica.

Behind them, the turning from which they had emerged into the Egidienplatz was empty. The S.S. men, apparently, had not cared to follow them out of the alley, and Anthony felt that things were running his way at last. He looked down into his companion's eyes and laughed.

" We've got to meet a friend of mine to-night. A man who helped me to get here, and who is on Muller's trail," he answered. " Until then we might as well enjoy our ride."

The taxi rattled on. It was exactly three hours since Muller had left his house and Butler had set off in pursuit.

CHAPTER SEVEN

MULLER was strolling along at an easy pace, and although Butler's exit from the little restaurant had been slowed up by the waitress he was not seriously worried. He put on speed so as to make up for lost time, and when he reached the corner of the street was shocked to find that his quarry had already disappeared.

It was impossible for him to have gone far in the short time he had been out of sight, and as Butler paused irresolute the mystery was solved by his reappearance. A small tobacconist's stood at the corner, its windows displaying the usual array of fearsome cigars, and Muller suddenly emerged from inside it, so that for an instant he and Butler were standing face to face.

But only for an instant. His expression a blank, Butler pulled the Baedeker he considered an essential part of the travelling business man's equipment out of his pocket, and pretended to be busy finding his bearings. He could see out of the corner of his eye that Muller was sauntering off, apparently undisturbed, and so as to supply a reason for having halted he dived into the shop and bought a handful of cigars. Then, putting his purchases into his pocket with the mental reservation that he need not smoke them, he folded the map so that his present route was uppermost and followed casually in the direction Muller had already taken.

It was, in a way, unfortunate that he was not the tripper he pretended to be, for apparently Muller was in no hurry and they proceeded to make a tour of some of the beauty spots of Nuremberg.

With Butler in unobtrusive attendance, the Continental Organiser of the Friends of Peace came into the Adolf Hitler Platz, and sauntered over to the Burgstrasse after an interested survey of the sculptured front of St. Sebaldus. He passed on, stood for a moment outside the castle, and went in. Butler followed him, assiduously reading his Baedeker, and they were swallowed up in a crowd of tourists following a guide.

Joining the throng, they went on to the battlements and gazed at the spot where the robber baron escaped by leaping his horse into the moat. They passed into the torture chamber, where the custodian described in an expressionless voice the various instruments for stretching the joints or breaking fingers, and finally came to the Nuremberg Maiden, which crushed men alive and dropped them in the river; and it seemed to Butler, as he edged his way towards the front, that at the last exhibit he saw a wistful gleam in Muller's eye. Whether he did or not, however, his quarry had had his fill of sightseeing, for when they emerged into the open Muller glanced at his watch and disentangled himself from the crowd.

To Butler's relief he set off at a businesslike pace towards the entrance. The rest of the tourists were splitting into small parties, so that it was easy for Butler to follow him without being conspicuous.

They had hardly reached the gates before Muller turned back again and came straight towards him.

It was too sudden for Butler to avoid the meeting. "Have you enjoyed our little tour of Nuremberg?" asked Muller affably. "If we are to continue it, I would suggest that we keep each other company instead of walking in procession."

" If you're a guide, and this is a new way of touting," retorted Butler, " the answer is No."

Muller smiled benignly. " My dear sir, why this modesty ? " he protested. " Surely you cannot think that your arrival in Nuremberg yesterday was allowed to go unnoticed ? "

They walked along together, and to a casual observer it would have seemed that they were two old friends who had met unexpectedly. Butler tensed himself for action, but Muller went on as if it were the most normal situation in the world.

" Your enquiries at the Pegnitzhof were enough to draw the attention of my subordinates, and as you both left the hotel this morning you were photographed with a telescopic lens. I was interested to recognise your companion as our young friend Anthony Wayne, who is wanted for murder in England; and when this afternoon you performed your amusing antics with a Baedeker I had no difficulty at all in guessing your own identity. Fortunately, I had some time to spare, so I have endeavoured to spend it in a way that would be useful and instructive to us both."

Butler's mouth went dry as he realised the trap into which they had fallen. He and Anthony ought never to have made enquiries of that shifty-eyed reception clerk, and now it meant that they were marked men. Anthony sitting in the restaurant eating cakes, and he chatting affably with Muller, were equally powerless.

" I don't know what you are talking about," said Butler.

" You'll find out," answered Muller grimly, and the next instant he had gripped Butler firmly by the arm and was shouting at the top of his voice.

" Help! Robbery!! Thief !!! "

He had chosen a moment when they were near a policeman, and as the official swung round Muller signalled to him urgently with his free hand.

" I want you to arrest this man. He got into conversation with me and I believe he's picked my pocket. My wallet's missing! "

Butler's brain was working feverishly during the second that the policeman took to reach them. He realised now why Muller had just spoken to him, realised why he had suggested that they should walk together. It would only need an hour or so for Muller to shake off all pursuit, and once Butler was in prison on a false charge he would be very lucky if he got out in less than two or three days. The wallet would probably be smuggled into his pocket on the way to the police station, and the evidence would be complete.

If Muller went to all this trouble to get rid of him, too, it looked as if he were engaged in something big. Butler had some idea of the intrigues in Nazi Germany, and once again he thought of that possible thirteenth move that would find England unprepared. He swore that he would not be got rid of so easily.

" You'd better come with me," suggested the policeman ominously, reaching out his hand, and as Muller loosened his grip Butler acted. He put out his foot and gave Muller a push that left him sprawling, then sprinted as fast as he could down the slope towards the Burgstrasse. Behind him the policeman was calling lustily for assistance, and as a passer-by tried to intercept him Butler felt that he could not keep this up for long.

He took a corner to the right, swung left again before his pursuers were in sight, and found himself in a long, straight street of tall houses with here and there a small shop or restaurant squeezed between. On his left was an open cellar flap that apparently gave on to the vaults of some wine company, although the ground floor of the building was occupied by a cobbler; and taking advantage of the fact the nobody was in sight at the moment Butler dived into the opening and slid down the broad ladder used for rolling barrels. He darted to the back of the cellar, crouched behind a cask, and heard the sound of pursuit swelling up as the hunt came nearer.

The pack surged along the street, checked, and came back. The number of pursuers seemed to have grown considerably since the chase started, but in the absence of any further thrills they began to lose their enthusiasm and go away. A sound of voices came to Butler's ears, and he realised that Muller and the policeman were talking on the pavement just outside the cellar opening. And, as Butler held his breath and listened, he was amused to hear that Muller had evidently picked himself up in time to lead the pursuit and had decided to close the incident. He spoke in a soothing tone.

"It's very good of you, officer. I'm glad there wasn't more in my wallet than a few notes. I'm afraid we shan't catch the villain now."

"It's my belief," said the policeman obstinately, "that he's hiding in one of these buildings. We ought to search the street."

"He can't be. I saw him going out of the far end of the street as I turned the corner," protested Muller. He raised his voice. "In any case, I shall be in this neighbourhood for some time, and if I see him again I shall know how to deal with him."

"I'm on beat round here myself," replied the policeman, and their voices died away as they moved off. Butler hoped strongly that in this case Muller's arguments would overcome the determination of the law.

He did not, however, like that remark of Muller's about staying in the neighbourhood. It might mean that he had a good idea of Butler's whereabouts and intended it to be heard as a threat. Probably he knew no more than that his adversary was hiding somewhere in the street, but if so he might decide to deal with the nuisance himself.

Whatever happened, Muller obviously did not want to involve the police. He would never have mentioned a stolen wallet if he could merely have handed over Butler as a spy, and Butler smiled to think that he had his enemy to thank for this short breathing space. He went cautiously to the barrel slide, climbed up the wooden steps at the side of it, and then ducked hastily back again.

The policeman, true to his trust, was still in the street. He was standing with his back to the wine cellar, keenly surveying the houses opposite; and Butler hoped this blank aspect would persuade him to abandon his search and go home to his tea. He went back into the shadows to examine his refuge.

The cellar was apparently used as an overflow storage-place for one of the restaurants farther along the street, for the barrels were mostly empty and at the back a flight of stairs covered with the dust of years led up to a door that was securely bolted at top and bottom on the far side. The tenant of the cobbler's shop on the ground floor obviously had no connection whatever with this part of the building, and after making sure that the door was locked Butler came down the stairs again with a feeling of failure. So far he was no nearer finding a way out than when he first dropped down into the place.

He was in a dangerous situation. At any moment a cellarman might come in by the flap and find him crouching among the barrels, and if the policeman were still lingering in the neighbourhood the slightest outcry would bring him back at the double.

There were barrels everywhere. They stood all over the floor, and unbroached ones were stacked in fixtures along the sides of the cellar, but beyond the stairs there was a dark corner where crates of bottles were piled to the ceiling and covered with cobwebs as if they had not been moved for years. Butler went over to them with some idea of making a hiding place beyond, and as he did so a ray of light caught his eye.

It came from behind the crates, and though it was scarcely more than a glimmer it set Butler pulling madly at the boxes with sudden hope. Where there was light there must be some sort of opening, and if he were lucky he would find that they hid another way of escape.

The crates came away easily enough, and soon Butler was faced with a dirty window that opened with a protesting squeal of hinges when he pushed it. It looked on to a yard, and turning round he pulled up the cases again so that they covered the way he had come and hid it from the cellar. Then he squeezed through the window. It was a tight fit and only half of it was above ground-level, but with a convulsive wriggle Butler got through and stood up.

He was in a yard. A small space flanked by two walls topped with broken glass, and at the far end was only another row of windows guarded by iron bars. The place was more of a ventilation shaft for the group of buildings than anything else, and it was apparent at a glance that there was no way out. The windows opposite gave Butler an uncomfortable feeling of being watched, however, and turning round he found himself looking through a half-open casement into the back room of the cobbler's shop.

Anything was better than staying in the open, and moving very quietly Butler pushed the casement still farther open. He straddled the sill, brought over his other leg, and stepped on to the faded roses of the carpet.

The room was small and heavily over-furnished, with a blue porcelain stove taking up one wall and a table covered with a red plush cloth standing in the mathematical centre of the floor. Three chairs exuded horsehair by the wall and a cheap clock ticked loudly on the shelf, but at the moment the place was a sanctuary that Butler regarded with delight. A door opposite led into the shop, and tiptoeing across he put his ear to the panels.

There was a steady sound of hammering on the far side, and this gave way to a mumbled conversation with a customer that showed that the cobbler was just beyond the door. And, however phlegmatic he might be, he was bound to greet the appearance of a complete stranger from his own back room with considerable surprise.

Butler glanced down at his suit. It had been neat enough when he left the hotel that afternoon, but, bearing as it did the signs of his struggle through the cellar window overlaying a stratum of cobwebs from the barrels, it was scarcely the sort of clothing to avoid comment if he ever got away. And he wanted to get out as soon as possible to warn Anthony and try once more to pick up Muller's trail.

" I'd better have a wash and brush up," murmured Butler, and going up the narrow staircase that opened from the sitting-room he found himself in a bedroom above, where stood a tiny washstand with a jug and basin that promised sufficient water for a rinse if nothing more.

The window looked on to the yard that Butler had just left, and as he was no nearer freedom he proceeded to make himself as tidy as circumstances permitted. It was not until he had dried himself on a doubtful towel and decided against straightening his hair with his host's brush, that Butler came on anything worth notice. Even then it was a thing that might mean very little.

It is always worth while to know as much about a future acquaintance as possible, and Butler looked carefully round the room before he went downstairs again. There was a bed, a tattered rug, and beneath a small table lay an envelope that had been torn across and then again. An ordinary commercial envelope, such as any business firm dealing with a cobbler might use, but of a distinctive bluish colour and bearing a Swiss stamp and the Berne postmark. Butler pursed his lips in a noiseless whistle. He examined the envelope carefully, and registering the fact of its existence in case it might be useful, came down to the little living-room again to wait.

He was confident of his ability to tackle the cobbler successfully, but it would be better to have any fight in the back room rather than in the shop. Butler made himself as comfortable as possible in one of the chairs, but long before the man stopped work his patience had worn out and he was wishing that he had visited a less industrious host.

The tap of the hammer went on continuously, interspersed with bursts of conversation, and it was not until very much later that Butler heard the welcome sound of shutters being put up and then a slow tread as the cobbler came towards the dividing door.

Butler got out of his seat, and as he did so the man came into the room. He caught sight of his unexpected visitor and for a moment stood motionless.

He was a tall, muscular fellow, who in the leather apron that he was wearing looked formidable enough, and Butler edged towards the porcelain stove where a heavy poker lay inside the iron guard. The cobbler's first words, however, put him more at his ease.

The man showed very little of the righteous indignation usually displayed by householders in the face of an intruder. Instead, he seemed uncertain whether to take flight or to greet Butler as a friend.

" Who are you ? " he asked slowly.

" I was given your name in Berne," answered Butler, and lifted his hand in the clenched fist salute. " They tell me there, Comrade, that you are a friend."

There was a second's pause, and then with an audible sigh of relief the cobbler relaxed. He returned Butler's greeting and dropped into a chair.

" You gave me a fright then, Comrade," he admitted. " What do you want ? "

" The Gestapo are after me, and I'd like to get out some other way than by using your front door," answered Butler.

It had been a wild shot in the dark, but it had come off. There was no reason, of course, why a cobbler in Nuremberg should not be receiving letters from Switzerland. Or, for that matter, why a foreman in Krupp's works at Essen should not do the same, or a rope merchant in the suburbs of Berlin. The postmark and the colour of the envelope were Butler's only clues, but the department of which he was a member knew a lot about the activities of Messrs. Gottfried Fink, Biedermann & Co., Foreign Agents in Berne, that Hitler's Gestapo would have given good money and lives if necessary to learn. The address masked the secret headquarters of the banned German Communist organisation, and rather than risk a fight Butler was prepared to become a member of that party until his host had got him out of the way.

He remembered that the envelope had been addressed to Carl Oppern, and spoke again.

"I'm on my way to Berlin, and for various reasons had to break my journey here. If you can get me out another way, Comrade Oppern, I shall be grateful."

The cobbler bustled to the little larder beyond his living-room and pulled out bread and a piece of sausage. He put a coffee-pot on the stove.

"You must have some food first," he invited hospitably. "If you don't know my second way out, how did you manage to get here?"

"I came through the cellar and your back window," explained Butler, and suddenly finding that he was very hungry he pulled up a chair and joined Carl Oppern at the table.

It was one of the most curious meals he had ever eaten. The cobbler seemed to have received him without suspicion, but at the questions put to him while they were eating Butler began to suspect that he was being tested. He racked his brains to remember all that he had ever heard of the headquarters in Berne and of the situation in Germany, and when at last Carl Oppern began to talk of other things it was evident that he had accepted his guest as genuine.

Butler, too, was made to realise once again the certainty of coming war. Carl Oppern spoke of it as unlikely merely because he considered that Britain would never fight, and Butler dared not contradict him. The cobbler told of secret communist broadcasts, of propaganda overshadowed by the fear of death or the concentration camp, and went on to speak of men he knew who were working on the

Western Wall, of others mobilised and yet others making armaments. Germany to-day was a huge arsenal supporting an enormous army, and when at last Oppern pushed back his chair he spoke the mind of all the opposition Germans who had no means of learning the truth.

" Hitler," he said, " is clever and will take Poland without a war. And that will give him another ten years in power. We of the Party hear certain things, and if England would unite with Russia . . ."

" You may be right," agreed Butler pacifically, thinking of those negotiations that were even then taking place in Moscow.

He looked out of the window. It was twilight, and any hope of finding where Muller had gone that afternoon was lost for ever. He could either rejoin Anthony, if he were still at the little confectioner's opposite the house with the green door, or else meet him at Winkler's in the Wine Market; but in either case he was anxious not to waste any more time. Butler rose to his feet.

" What about your back way here? The yard doesn't show any signs of it."

" Follow me and I'll show you, Comrade," said Carl Oppern, and he opened the window that Butler now noticed was silent as if the hinges had been recently oiled. They picked their way across the little yard.

" All bars that look firm are not necessarily fixed at both ends," went on the cobbler sententiously, and as they reached the row of windows opposite he seized two bars and twisted them so that they came out of their sockets. He lowered them to the ground, opened the window, and disappeared into the darkness beyond.

Butler followed, and found himself in what was evidently a large woollen warehouse, for the unmistakable odour of cloth in large quantities came to his nostrils and he could dimly see that they were standing in an aisle between great fixtures full of bales. With the confidence born of long practice, the cobbler picked his way round corners and went towards the far corner of the room.

" How do we get out at the other end ? " asked Butler.

" Side door," answered Carl Oppern shortly, and then pride in the neatness of his exit led him to give further explanation.

" It doesn't matter if the night watchman sees us. He's one of the Comrades."

" An extremely useful arrangement," agreed Butler; and arriving at the end of a similar aisle in the farther room they came to a door in the outer wall that had a spring lock. Carl Oppern paused before opening it.

" You did not bring me any message ? " he asked longingly.

From his manner it was obvious the man was merely one of the chain of people who could pass on couriers from Berne to the farthest corners of Germany, and Butler realised that he was secretly longing for a more glorious rôle. He shook his head.

" Nothing. If I get back from Berlin safely, however, I will mention your name."

Carl Oppern opened the little door softly, and then pushed Butler back into the darkness and as softly closed it again.

" Schupo ! " he hissed, and they heard the measured tread of a policeman who paused, tried the door, then moved away again. The cobbler mopped his forehead.

"A near thing," he remarked, and again opened the door.

The way out was unobstructed. "Good luck, Comrade," said Carl Oppern softly, and the last glimpse Butler had of him before he closed the door again was as he speeded his parting guest with the clenched-fist salute.

Butler had not any personal interest either way in the government of Germany. He was concerned solely with the good of Great Britain, but on this occasion the communists had been very useful to him. He returned the salute, and looked round to see where he had come.

The warehouse fronted on to a lighted street, and he was standing in a narrow passage between buildings. Butler walked boldly out of the darkness, and as he was not certain where he was he turned to the left until he could make sure of his direction.

The street was mainly residential, and just at first it seemed as if his appearance was unnoticed. A workman reading the evening newspaper glanced in his direction and removed his hat thoughtfully to scratch his head, and then it suddenly became apparent that there were more people about than had originally appeared.

The policeman who had first attracted Carl Oppern's attention was standing not far from Butler. A front door opened and a young man came down the steps on to the pavement, a car parked farther along the road started up its engine and came slowly along the street.

They were all little things that might be perfectly natural, but all things that might, on the other hand, bear a more sinister explanation. The policeman, at any rate, had no designs on Butler, for he moved off down an alley. Butler paused for a moment and looked back, and as he did so the moving car passed beneath a light and he was able to see the driver.

. . . A man with closely cropped hair, on which was perched a green felt hat. A pronounced cast in one eye, and the white of a duelling scar glinting across his cheek. There was no mistaking Max, and Butler drew in his breath.

It was obvious now why Muller had called off the chase earlier, when Butler was hiding in the wine cellar; obvious that his words to the policeman had indeed contained a threat. He had guessed that his quarry was near, though he probably did not know exactly where; and preferring to get him into his own clutches rather than hand him over to the police, he had called up his men to watch all exits. He might or might not have guessed at a secret door such as that used by the cobbler, but at any rate Butler was now in a street backing on that in which he had disappeared, and Muller was not the man to run any risks.

And, as had already been proved, he was a man who would have no difficulty in abducting anyone, even in the middle of Nuremberg.

The workman came across the street. "Got a match, sir?" he asked.

"Nicht Raucher," replied Butler, a memory of German non-smoking compartments rising in his mind; and as the workman lunged forward he handed him off in a way that would have attracted the attention of the selection committee at Twickenham, and tore down the street.

He could see in the distance the side of St. Sebaldus, and guessed that he was making for the Rathausplatz. The young man who had come out of the house farther along the street leaped in pursuit, he could hear Max's car gathering speed behind him, and Butler sprinted on with the one idea of escaping from the trap.

It was as he reached the wider spaces of the Rathausplatz that things really began to happen. Someone in Max's car whistled shrilly, and as Butler was on the point of stepping into the roadway beyond the street a friendly passer-by caught him by the shoulders and swung him back.

A taxi, painted blue instead of the older green, and possessed of a powerful engine, swept at top speed over the spot where Butler would have been standing if nobody had stopped him. His rescuer, a large man in air-force uniform, grinned affably.

" Damned roadhogs! " he remarked.

" My mother, to whose bedside I am hurrying, will be eternally grateful to you," answered Butler breathlessly; but as he sped on again he realised that it was useless to run any farther.

Max was following at a distance, and apparently held a watching brief only, but there were a hundred accidents that might happen to him, and if he escaped them he would only lead the pursuit to Anthony as well.

" This needs thinking out," said Butler, and feeling that there was safety in numbers he turned towards a brilliantly lighted restaurant not far from the Rathaus and plunged inside. Then, sinking into a chair, he mopped his brow.

The place was only half full, and the table Butler had chosen was unoccupied. He did not like the idea of being joined at it by one of his pursuers; and, seeing another on his left which had two seats of which only one was vacant, he got up again and went across to it.

It was already in the possession of a young man of studious aspect who was reading a book propped up in front of him, and Butler bowed from the waist.

" Heil Hitler. Is it permitted to take this seat ? "

The young man bowed in return. " Heil Hitler. The honour is mine."

Butler was conscious that the exercise had left him with a hearty thirst, and caught a passing waiter. " Bring me beer in large quantities," he ordered, and settled down to think out the position.

He had gone to earth, but, to carry the analogy a little farther, would Muller put in a terrier to drive him out ? A faked accident such as had nearly happened to him a minute earlier, an illness and the convenient arrival of that same taxi to take him to a doctor, even a revival of the accusation that he had picked Muller's pockets. There seemed a hundred unpleasant possibilities when Butler ran through them, and behind them all lurked the thought that even if he were safe inside the restaurant he could scarcely go out again by the same way.

The waiter brought him a tall glass of golden lager, and Butler turned to him for information. " Is there another way out ? " he asked.

" Only an exit for the staff, sir," replied the man; and realising that he was definitely not one of the staff and that any breach of etiquette would only lead to trouble, Butler took a gloomy draught.

He was watching the door; and presently it swung open to admit Max, who looked round the restaurant for a moment and then seated himself so that he was facing Butler. He was evidently in no hurry to make a new move, however, for he ordered himself a drink and prepared to settle down. The evening had turned chilly, and divesting himself of his green felt hat and overcoat of equally distressing colour he hung them on a stand beside him. Then he fixed Butler with as straight a stare as the cast in his eye permitted, and slowly grinned.

Butler shuddered. Max was not good looking at the best of times, and at the moment he definitely spoilt the whole appearance of the restaurant. Rather than continue to watch the fellow, he tried to engage his opposite number in conversation.

" You are a student ? " he asked tentatively.

The young man looked up, sighed, and took off his spectacles.

" I am trying to study now," he pointed out mildly. " It is the duty of every German to work, so as to make himself more useful to the Führer."

" Undoubtedly true," agreed Butler, refusing to be put off. " Now I am an English business man, and this afternoon I have been enjoying the sights of your wonderful city."

The young man showed signs of returning to his book. " I am not a native here, so Nuremberg is not my city," he pointed out.

" In that case, let me tell you what I've seen," persevered Butler, signalling for more beer, and for a short time he was almost able to forget Max and the fate that waited for him as soon as he went outside.

He was not, however, able to forget it for very long. He had left Anthony at three o'clock, and it had been after nine before he parted from the communist cobbler outside the woollen warehouse, and now the clock showed that it would soon be ten. He had arranged to meet Anthony before midnight and so far he was no nearer a solution of the problem of how he was to reach the Wine Market than he had been when Max first came into the restaurant.

An illuminated glass sign stated HERREN in one corner of the room, and Butler went across to it past the end of the passage that the waiter had described as an exit for staff only. It was long and straight, and had a glass door at the far end, and through the panes Butler caught sight of a familiar face beneath a lamp. The workman he had eluded earlier was standing outside and no doubt thirsting for revenge.

Butler returned to his table, noting with satisfaction that, although the studious young man had taken the opportunity to escape, Max had not come across to take his vacant seat. He looked gratefully at Muller's secretary, and what he saw gave him fresh food for thought.

With a leer that made his face even more repellent than usual, Max pulled a watch out of his pocket, turned it so that the dial was facing Butler, and swung his finger round from the horizontal so that it covered a semicircle and ended at the half-hour. He kept it there for a minute, leered again, and then, evidently satisfied that his meaning had been taken, replaced the watch and sat back in his chair. Butler nodded, waved one hand, and also sat back.

The meaning was obvious. If Butler did not come out within the next half-hour, Max had some plan for fetching him. And if Muller were the inventor of the plan, Butler had no doubt that it would be successful. It remained only to await events and do his utmost to resist whatever happened.

" Does the humble winkle surrender without a struggle ? " asked Butler of the waiter. " No, he resists until ejected with a pin."

He realised that the man was looking at him with some astonishment, and hastened to put matters on a saner basis.

"More beer."

The waiter was elderly and flat footed. He nodded as if this were more within his comprehension.

"Very good, sir," he answered; and fortified by another drink Butler set himself to wait during the fateful half-hour.

The minutes ticked away. One or two customers looked at their watches, hastily finished their drinks, and left the restaurant, but Max still remained at the other table. It was not until five minutes before the half-hour that he rose from his seat, and coming across plumped himself into the chair opposite Butler.

"Do you want to come quietly, or shall we fetch you?" he demanded.

"I'm quite comfortable where I am, thank you," replied Butler.

Again the repellent leer crossed Max's features. He seemed to find something very amusing, but what it was Butler could not imagine.

"I'll sit here till half-past ten, then. You'll regret the extra trouble you're giving us," he stated.

"You won't sit with me. I don't like your conversation, and if you dislike mine equally we shall both be happier in other company," retorted Butler, and without any warning he got up and moved to another table where there was only one vacant chair.

He took his glass with him, and the counter at the back of the restaurant ran behind his seat so that he could scarcely be taken in the rear. It was just as he sat down that the clock struck the half-hour.

As the clock struck, all the lights in the restaurant suddenly went out.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE buzz of conversation died away at the tables, but its place was taken by another noise. From the street outside came the wail of sirens which rose and fell eerily, and there was a sudden bustle of running feet.

The darkness had brought the elderly waiter to a standstill near the counter, and Butler caught him by the sleeve.

" What's happened ? " he asked.

The waiter gave a start and tried to pull himself away, and Butler tightened his grip.

" Why have the lights gone out ? "

" Let me go, sir," pleaded the man.

Someone had produced a candle which he stuck on the wooden surface of the counter, and there was the glimmer of a match. The waiter wriggled, and pointed with his free hand towards a notice on the wall.

" I mustn't stay here. I have to get to my post quickly, and Franz, who should help me to put on my clothing, is away ill."

The candle was now burning steadily, and somehow its tiny light outlined the notice so that Butler could read the printed heading.

LUFTSCHUTZÜBUNGEN.

And underneath, in smaller letters, the word

VERDUNKELUNG.

" A.R.P. Blackout, eh ? " said Butler, and seeing in the semi-darkness that Max had left his seat he acted promptly.

"In an air raid even candles should be forbidden," he told the man behind the counter severely, and picking up his beer glass he threw its contents straight on to the flame. Then, still gripping the waiter's arm, he jumped up and hurried him towards the staff exit.

"Permit me to take the place of the absent Franz and help you with your clothing."

"The Herr is very kind," answered the waiter doubtfully, "but as he has no official position——"

"Get a move one, or you'll be late," interrupted Butler.

He knew something of the way in which Air Raid Precautions were run in Germany. There would be an official responsible for the whole block of buildings of which the restaurant formed a part, and each tenant would be responsible for his own premises. An establishment such as the restaurant, employing many men, would provide its own fire brigade, and they might or might not have uniform or protective clothing as the management's generosity or economy dictated. He began to see a faint chance of getting away safely.

Butler's captive seemed to have given up all thought of resistance. He led the way unwillingly to a small room at one side of the passage, and thrusting him inside Butler pulled the door shut behind them and turned the key. Then he put himself against the panels and surveyed the waiter by the light of a match that he pulled out of his pocket.

The management had been generous, for he caught a glimpse of fire helmets on a shelf behind the man's head, and of clothing on hangers against the wall.

"You have a spare suit belonging to Franz?" asked Butler. "Rather than allow the Nuremberg blackout to be a failure, I will put it on myself."

He noticed an electric torch beside the fire helmets, and picking it up levelled its beam full in the waiter's face. The man was obviously on the point of starting a lengthy protest, and Butler spoke first.

" I am," he went on with a touch of humility, " a Hamburg Jew on my mother's father's side. I came to Nuremberg to transact some business that, as a quarter non-Aryan, the Führer in his wisdom would not permit me to do, and a man who used to be my friend has recognised me and has told the police. If I am caught, it will mean the concentration camp."

He looked at the waiter with entreaty in his eyes. " By conviction I am a good citizen of the Reich. Why should I have to starve? If you resist, I shall stun and gag you and wear Franz's clothing anyway, but if you prefer to help me I will return the suit to-morrow in a parcel addressed to you Poste Restante at the General Post Office."

Butler paused. " Also, I will give you a hundred marks now, and there will be another hundred marks inside the parcel."

" If I could be sure that nobody would suspect . . ." sighed the waiter wistfully.

" Two hundred marks are better than being stunned and gagged," pointed out Butler.

The waiter, as has been said, was elderly, and knew that Butler was fully capable of carrying out his threat. He weighed the two alternatives in his mind, and decided that the argument was incontrovertible.

" I sympathise with the Herr, and will help him in his difficulty," he declared with dignity.

" Your decision is welcome to us both," answered Butler, but even as he grabbed a suit of anti-gas clothing there was a sudden hammering at the door.

The waiter jumped as if he had been shot. "Nobody should be here now," he quavered. "We—we all have our posts."

"Leave this to me," commanded Butler; and in defiance of all regulations for donning A.R.P. clothing he pulled a respirator over his face, opened the door, and thrust his snouted visage into the passage.

The interrupter was Max, and he was evidently in a hurry. "Has anyone come this way?" he panted.

"Only those who have authority. This is the Staff Exit," replied Butler.

He pointed towards the glass door at the end of the passage. "Now that you mention it, though, a man ran past here immediately after the lights went out. He left by that door."

"He can't have done!" said Max angrily.

"Kindly leave my comrade and me to don our equipment," answered Butler, and whether it was because he spoke too eagerly, or because Max recognised his voice, Muller's secretary stiffened.

"Take off that gas mask," he ordered curtly.

His hand was moving towards his pocket, and Butler had no time to hesitate. He had already noticed that a bucket of sand stood in the passage just beside the door, and he bent down and picked it up.

"Have a look inside this bucket," he suggested, and turning it over he neatly crowned Max with it before he could level his revolver.

Max gave a strangled yell. The bucket came down over his shoulders and sand fell in showers to the floor, and if Butler had not caught him he would have fallen as if pole-axed. Butler pulled him inside the room and closed the door again, and, conscious that the elderly waiter was watching him with wide eyes, bound Max hand and foot and removed the bucket to stuff a handkerchief into his mouth. Then he turned to the terrified waiter.

"I've got to tie and gag you after all," he said cheerfully. "I'll put the two hundred marks inside your pocket. Then, when Comrade Max and you are found, you will be able to explain that you were both my victims."

The waiter could only goggle helplessly, and Butler bound him as gently as possible. Then he turned to the pegs of clothing, and when he emerged from the room five minutes later he was a figure that not even his best friend would have recognised.

Clad in heavy oilskins, a fire helmet on his head and his respirator, contrary to all regulations, still covering his face, Butler walked with leisured steps into the restaurant and picked his way between the candle-lit tables towards the street. Then, remembering that it would be chilly outside and that he could not wear his present garb for ever, he came back, helped himself to a hat and coat from one of the stands, and bundled them under his arm.

He picked up a long-handled spade and a bucket of sand from the doorway to add the final touch to his costume, and made his way towards the Adolf Hitler Platz, from whence came a flickering red glow.

The streets were in darkness, but all round him was a scene of frenzied activity. A big car, its swastika pennant dimly fluttering and its occupants in uniform with rosettes to show that they were observers, sped past in the direction of the Adolf Hitler Platz. Motor cyclists roared by and men were patrolling in similar clothing to that which Butler was wearing, and as he realised that his respirator now made him look conspicuous he took it off and put it in its haversack.

Then, coming into the great square, he found himself at the heart of the whole exercise.

A fire was burning merrily in the middle of the open space, and the dark figures of firemen with hoses could be seen in silhouette against the glare. The idea, apparently, had been to take Nuremberg in the middle of its ordinary work and treat the whole thing as if there really were an air raid, for stranded cars stood beside the pavements with lights extinguished when their drivers had fled to cover, and in one corner of the square was a knot of people in ordinary clothes who wore notices round their necks and were evidently intended to be casualties. A train of ambulances swung out of a side street and came to rest beside them.

Everybody was working, and only Butler had nothing to do. Not quite everybody, however, was engaged in testing the blackout, for suddenly the young man Butler had seen in the little street where Max first laid a trap for him appeared from the turning lately occupied by the ambulances and looked keenly round. He caught sight of Butler in the glow from the fire, and, now that he had discarded his respirator, recognised him at once.

The young man opened his mouth to shout, and turned round to beckon urgently into the street behind him. Butler caught him by the arm and the back of the neck, ran him towards the rearmost ambulance in the square, and spoke rapidly to the driver.

He was wearing his fire helmet and protective clothing, and that lent a little authority to his words. Otherwise it was the merest bluff.

"Casualty driven mad by shock," said Butler, indicating his struggling victim. "Don't take any notice of what he says, but take him immediately to the First Aid Post."

Rigid discipline has its uses, and among other things it means that any man with a ring of authority in his voice can get things done simply because the recipient of his orders dare not risk disobeying anyone who may be of importance. The driver signalled to a couple of stretcher bearers inside the ambulance, and they took over Butler's charge.

Another man was approaching, and he might be the real officer. " Quickly, there," commanded Butler.

" Jawohl, Herr Feuerwehrmann," replied the driver gruffly, and reversing for a moment on to the pavement he swung his ambulance round and sped away.

Butler went across to the fire so that he was lost in the crowd of workers, and coming to the far side of the square saw a dispatch rider dismount and leave his motor-cycle by the kerb. Butler jumped into the saddle as its lawful owner disappeared, kicked the starter, and as the engine roared into life with a satisfying note he sped off into the shadows of the Tuchgasse. Three minutes later he was able to leave his cycle in an empty alley, and pulling off the fireman's clothing he stuffed it behind some railings and put on the hat and overcoat he had taken from the restaurant in the Rathausplatz.

He had hardly become a civilian again before the sirens sounded the All Clear. The raid was evidently over, for lights sprang on again in streets and houses, and Butler realised that he must waste no more time. Keeping a wary look-out, he set off towards Winkler's in the Wine Market. The blackout had taken just over an hour, and if he wanted to meet Anthony he would have to hurry.

By the time he reached the Wine Market, Nuremberg was returning to normal life. Lights were blazing and people moving about the streets, but there were signs that the cafés and restaurants would shortly be closing as usual in deference to Hitler's edict that Germany must not have a night life. Butler pushed through swing doors that were unattended, walked down a staircase gaudily decorated in red and silver, and found himself in a little restaurant that was empty save for a couple sitting in the far corner.

Anthony, and with him a girl who was hatless and whose corn-coloured hair lay in unruly waves. A girl who was speaking earnestly, and to whom Anthony listened as if the whole world hung upon her words. The noise of Butler's entry disturbed them, and as Anthony swung round he jumped to his feet.

"So here you are at last!" he exclaimed. "We were beginning to think that something must have happened."

The phrase struck Butler as an inadequate description of his adventures, but he let the matter pass. He looked at Anthony's companion and raised an eyebrow.

"We?" he queried.

Anthony flushed. "Monica, this is Captain Butler. Butler, I managed to get Miss Hayward away from Muller's, so I brought her here."

The dramatic announcement hung for a moment in the heavy air of Winkler's, and Butler waved a hand to one of the tired waiters.

"This wants celebrating," he announced, and nodded when the man told him that they would be closing in ten minutes. "Bring us beer. My friends have been waiting for me during the blackout, and now that it is over we shall return to our hotel."

He bowed to Monica. "It seems that Anthony has been rescuing Beauty while I have been playing touch-last with the Beast."

"You mean Muller?" asked Monica. She shivered. "I've been—talking to him. And Anthony says I've got some information you haven't yet heard."

Anthony nodded. "The trouble is that we can't stay here and talk it over, and we can't go back to our hotel."

"At present," agreed Butler, "there does not appear to be anywhere in Nuremberg where we can rest our heads. During the last few hours I have been tourist, communist, business man with Jewish ancestry, and fireman, and I find the change of character a little tiring. To prevent Muller turning us into angels before we've had time to learn the harp, I would suggest a change of air."

"Where could we go?" demanded Anthony.

The little beer cellar was very hot and stuffy. The proprietor had switched off all save a couple of lights as a hint that it was time to leave, and the waiter who had brought their beer leaned confidentially over the table.

"We close in five minutes by regulation, sir," he whispered. "Shall I call you a taxi?"

"We'll walk, thanks," said Anthony hastily, realising that at present they would have no address to give to the driver, and he knew that now they definitely had to find some lodging for the night.

"Can you suggest anything?" he persisted. "We've lost all our luggage and daren't fetch it, and I don't know anybody who would take us in."

Butler rose to his feet. He picked up the overcoat that he had purloined from the restaurant in the blackout, and put it on with a flamboyant gesture.

"The lightning," he said sententiously, "never strikes the same place twice. Muller will never think of looking for us at Miss Hayward's brother's lodgings, so we will throw ourselves on the mercy of Frau Dittmer."

"She'll take us in if we offer enough money," agreed Anthony.

He remembered his first meeting with Monica in England, when she had come into his dining-room to find Stephen's body sprawled on the carpet with that awful look of fear upon his face, and turned to her.

"You won't mind?"

"Why should I mind Steve's lodgings?" answered Monica. "We've more important things to think about now. Besides, it—it might somehow show him that we are carrying on."

Butler nodded approvingly. "I don't know how Anthony managed to rescue you," he said as he followed her up the stairs, "but if I'd known as much of you as he did, I'd have taken the risk myself," and they emerged into the open air to find that Nuremberg was growing silent for the night.

It was a very scared Frau Dittmer who, a soiled wrap drawn round her shoulders, opened the door of her flat an hour later in answer to their knock. She gazed at them in the light of the naked electric bulb that lit the landing and when she realised who they were her fear turned to anger.

"Is this a time to wake up honest people?" she demanded shrilly.

She looked at Monica. "The Fräulein may be Herr Hayward's sister, but that does not mean——"

Anthony flourished a fifty-mark note under her nose. "We want to spend the night here, and are willing to pay for it," he interrupted. "Can you give us room?"

" Not if you're wanted by the police," retorted Frau Dittmer.

It was an instinctive reaction, prompted by the atmosphere of distrust in Nazi Germany; but her gaze remained riveted on the notes, and half unwillingly she opened the door.

" We might, however, consider the question."

" Miss Hayward is tired, and we have nowhere else to go," pleaded Anthony. " We'll make it worth your while."

" Come inside," replied Frau Dittmer with sudden decision, and once they were in the dingy sitting-room and the outer door was safely closed her fears and suspicions seemed to have abated.

" One has to take precautions, you understand. If the Herren will sleep on the floor, the Fräulein may have the other room with pleasure."

" The floor will suit us excellently," Butler assured her, and turned to Monica.

" Are you too tired for us to have our talk now ? "

" I shan't sleep unless we do," replied Monica; and after Frau Dittmer had departed to arrange for their comfort they sat round the plush-covered table in the sitting-room for a council of war.

It was war, too, and the manner of waging war, that hung upon their words. The agony of mothers who had lost their children, the tears of countless motherless babes, might be prevented if they could retain their freedom. For there, in the cabbage-laden atmosphere of Stephen's old sitting-room, they first learned something of the urgency of their case.

Monica, her chin on her hand and her blue eyes very earnest, somehow slipped into the place of chairman of that strange meeting. She turned to Butler.

" Have you found out anything ? "

"Except that Muller knows us and is anxious to improve the acquaintance, I haven't," answered Butler. "You and Anthony seem to have been in closer touch with things than I have been."

Anthony nodded. "Monica and I have been talking ever since we got out of his house. There's a big plot on foot, and she has gleaned some hints that help to explain why poor old Stephen came to England and why Muller had to follow and murder him for fear of what he knew. We found, too, that Muller has friends among the Nazi party, and that we're running things very close."

"We haven't got an hour to waste!" cried Monica. She leaned forward and looked eagerly at both her listeners. "I couldn't wait in England while Anthony came to Nuremberg alone. I hoped I might be able to help him, and so I flew over and arrived here first. Muller had me doped almost as soon as I got to the hotel, and there's something in that house of his I can't understand and yet of which I kept getting hints."

"Did he give you any idea of what he means to do?" asked Butler.

"He intended to leave Nuremberg to-night in any case, but he didn't tell me where he's going," answered Monica. "And he's got another prisoner in the house: a man who escaped from his room this morning and came downstairs to mine. Then they found out what had happened and he was dragged away."

She was silent for a moment while she recalled the scene. She had been sitting in the chair that, with the bed and washstand, formed her prison's only furniture; and suddenly there was a stealthy turning of the key in the lock that was very different from the entry of any of her gaolers.. She had waited with beating heart while the door opened inch by inch, and then there had shuffled in a man whose stooping figure seemed to fill the whole frame of the doorway, and who, closing the door behind him, had gazed at her for a moment with the eyes of a dumb animal.

" I think he was a peasant," went on Monica. " At first I couldn't understand a word he said."

The man was wearing a blue coat and torn breeches, and he had spoken to her in a language she had never heard before. Then, when he saw she did not follow him, there came a sudden arrogant anger into the eyes beneath the heavy eyebrows and the thatch of dark hair. For an instant he had stood like that, and then, with a sudden change of mood, had come across to finger the sleeve of her jumper.

" Pretty," he had said with momentary lucidity, and he now spoke a German patois that was just distinguishable. " I like you."

There had come a sudden shouting from the passage beyond the door, and he had lifted Monica like an infant out of her chair.

" You shall be with me always——" he had told her thickly, and then as the door flung open he had dropped her and turned to meet the onrushing men, only to crouch like a whipped dog as Muller strode in ahead of his followers and ordered the prisoner back to his room.

The intelligence had died out of those red-rimmed eyes, and as he left there was a horrid fawning in his gait. The gait, Monica remembered, of a half-tamed wild animal that fears the whip; and gradually the vision faded and she was back in Frau Dittmer's sitting-room, with Butler watching her keenly and Anthony gazing into her face as if he had seen a ghost.

" What happened then ? " asked Anthony.

" Nothing," answered Monica, and forced a smile. " He was very big and shambled in his walk, and he was—dreadful. He had red eyes that only occasionally showed any sign of a brain behind them, and I think that he was either dull-witted or else mad. He was gentle enough with me, though, and he must have been important, for I heard Muller afterwards telling his men outside that if anything happened to him, or if he got the chance to speak to me again, they would pay dearly for it. He spoke in a way that made you frightened to listen to him, and then he came into my room and talked to me."

" What did he say? " demanded Butler.

" He was far worse than the other man," answered Monica simply.

She was conscious that Anthony had gripped her hand in his, and again she had a vision of that room with its window facing on to a blank wall, when Muller had come striding softly in and had stood for a moment looking down on her. A Muller who had removed his glasses and made no attempt to appear other than the man he was.

Anthony tightened his fingers. " We've talked this over together," he told Butler, " and I wouldn't ask Monica to go through it again if it wasn't desperately important. I'd like to kill the man with my own hands! "

" Of course I've got to tell it. Didn't I come to Nuremberg to try and help? " said Monica, and looking dreamily across the room she went on with her tale. " At first Muller was too angry to talk much. He tried to find out what I'd heard from the man—Number 26 he called him—and when I said I hadn't understood him he calmed down. . . . He looked almost like a man you'd trust and think of as your friend."

Butler, who had studied the Continental Organiser of the Friends of Peace closely, nodded.

" One of friend Muller's tricks," he remarked drily. " What did he say next ? "

" He said that the man wouldn't trouble me again, that we were leaving Nuremberg to-morrow, and that the man had no importance except for his place in the whole plan. ' He's just a piece of grit,' Muller told me, ' that, dropped into the world's machinery, will bring the great power-plants to a standstill and cause them, when they are mended, to work for a new master. And the grit won't survive being dropped into the machine.' "

Monica was striving to remember Muller's own words, to forget the way he had looked at her while he was speaking, so that she had shrunk away as she had never done from the lunatic. Muller had laughed harshly, and told her that, tempting though she was, he must reluctantly sacrifice his pleasures to more important things. She had a part to play in his schemes, and it was a pity she was so desirable because it almost made him change his mind. And that, he feared, was an impossibility.

There had been one other thing she wanted to forget, and she had not mentioned it to Anthony because it could not possibly be important. Muller had gone away, and an hour later the madman had been brought down to her room again. With Max standing beside him, he had devoured Monica with his eyes; and afterwards Max had spoken to him in his own language, so that the madman had grinned while he looked eagerly at her and then the arrogance had come back into his eyes.

" You will be mine," he told her ; " I shall have you always," and then they had taken him away. A thing not worth mentioning, but one that had taken a distorted prominence in Monica's mind.

" Tell Captain Butler the rest of what Muller said," urged Anthony.

Monica went back to the scene, striving to find his exact words lest any of them should contain a vital clue.

" I told him we weren't afraid, and that he'd never succeed," she answered, " and he was angry and I think said more than he intended. That shortly the democracies would know the weight of Germany, and that Germany would win."

" See any of Hitler's speeches," interrupted Butler, and then apologised.

" Didn't Muller say anything else? "

Monica pressed her hands against her eyes in an effort of memory. There had been a moment when Muller had spoken of time, when she had annoyed him and he had looked down at her with a mocking smile upon his face. Slowly she spoke his words.

" Muller said something like this. He looked at me, and it ought to be easy to remember. 'A pity that we have to waste your beauty,' he said. 'Doubtless you look on this imprisonment as an act of mercy, but I fear that later you will change your mind. For on the sixteenth of this month, or early on the seventeenth, the grit will be dropped into the power-plant. The grit will perish, and you, I regret to tell you, will accompany it in death.' "

The sitting-room was silent. The ticking of the clock on the sideboard and the shuffle of Frau Dittmer's slippered feet in the kitchen were very clear, and Anthony found himself staring at the calendar that hung on a wall. Butler followed his gaze and nodded.

It was long after midnight, and getting up Butler went over to tear off another day. " This is the fifteenth of August," he said solemnly. " God knows what is going to let hell loose in the world, and we don't even know where it's going to start. We're all alone, and at the most we have two days! "

" If it's the morning of the seventeenth, we have just forty-eight hours," agreed Anthony.

The door creaked as Frau Dittmer came into the room. " I've made the bed," she announced, " and there's hot water. I remember Herr Hayward always wanted that."

" We'll think this over in the morning," said Butler, and turned to Monica. " We may have some ideas by then."

" Heaven knows we need them," groaned Anthony; and all through a restless night he thought the same.

CHAPTER NINE

" GUNS may be more important than butter," said Butler, " but Goering never got his figure through eating dry toast and looking at a howitzer."

He helped himself to a roll and a minute portion of Frau Dittmer's butter pat, took a cautious sip of the synthetic coffee, and went on.

" Anthony and I have washed in a ridiculously inadequate basin in the kitchen sink, owing to a very natural disinclination to show ourselves at the pump outside and thus excite curiosity, we have slept on a floor that from personal experience I can declare to have been laid down as a gun emplacement and to have hardened with age, and at the moment our brains are not what they were. We will leave it to the feminine element in our party to supply ideas."

Frau Dittmer was an early riser and had relentlessly seen to it that they were not late for breakfast, but the room looked brighter in the morning sunshine and it was difficult to feel the same urgency that they had the night before. Only Butler's eyes and the pinched lines round his mouth showed that he was feeling the strain and that his levity was merely a cloak to hide his feelings.

" Do you think Muller is really on to something big ? " asked Anthony.

Butler became serious. " So far as my department knows, we shall have war within a fortnight. And we think we know how it will come. Once you've decided not to believe anything Hitler says in public you can follow his mind pretty easily, and if he moves as we expect he will, he will give us time to get ready while he still hopes to conquer Poland and then keep us out of the fight. There's a big movement in Germany that wants something else, though, and it might take us by surprise. We don't know what it is, and I believe friend Muller is one of its chief leaders."

He paused. " I cannot tell you too often that our work is unromantic. We leave Afghan horse-dealers and eunuchs in Baghdad to the writers of romances, but we have our agents, and some of them have touched the fringe of what we're tackling now. There was a commercial traveller staying in a grubby little hotel in Leipzig, a girl who has danced half a dozen times in one of Hitler's favourite shows in Vienna, a tripper on a Rhine steamer who apparently couldn't speak a word of German, and a foreign correspondent of one of the London dailies who couldn't write journalese but who found the underworld of Warsaw extraordinarily enlightening. They all told us it's war, which we knew already, and they all had some hint that it wasn't going to be the war we thought."

His words sank into silence, and they sat for a minute realising what they meant. Then Anthony crashed his hand down on to the table.

" And we don't even know where Muller was going after he left Nuremberg! " he cried bitterly.

" On the contrary," replied Butler, " we have a very good idea."

" You mean you've guessed? " asked Monica.

" It's better than a guess," replied Butler, " and if I hadn't been so worried last night I should have thought of it long ago. As it was, it came to me while Anthony was wallowing in luxurious slumber on the concrete, so I abandoned my couch to the black beetles and tiptoed across him to verify my idea. Then, as there was nothing we could do till morning, I went back to the floor."

"You found a clue here?" asked Anthony. "What is it?"

He looked at Butler indignantly. "Do you mean to say that you knew this all the time we were eating breakfast, and that you didn't tell us earlier?"

"We shall have to get hold of a car, and we couldn't do that in the small hours of the morning," pointed out Butler; and getting up he went to the coat he had taken from the café, which was draped across a chair.

"Last night, on the principle of spoiling the Philistines, I took this coat. And, although I didn't like the colour, I made very sure that the one I purloined was the property of our old friend Max. In its pockets I found even more than I had hoped."

"What was there?" asked Monica eagerly.

Butler rummaged in the pockets. He pulled out a cigar case, a pencil, a box of matches, a photograph of a girl—"She can't be particular," he remarked in passing, "or she wouldn't be here,"—and finally a leather tab about the size of a large visiting card, with the swastika stamped in gold on one side and on the other a few letters and some figures.

W-F 3
M-o-L
8

Anthony looked at it, and flipped it contemptuously with his forefinger. "What's the good of that?" he asked. "We're not interested in Max's cloakroom ticket."

"It doesn't look very helpful," agreed Monica. "What does it all mean?"

"It's a guess, but a pretty safe one," explained Butler, "that it's a card of admission. As a matter of fact, I can go farther than that. Several members of my department have been very interested in W-F 3, and I can tell you a bit about it."

He paused. "Waffenfabrik Drei, or Munitions Factory 3, as they call it, is a place where they are believed to be experimenting with metals, and where we think they're turning out a completely new type of light gun. Guarded like the Bank of England and just as well worth looking into. Muller doesn't make his living out of the Friends of Peace—we know it's only a sideline of his—and for ten months in the year he simply disappears. If he isn't Number One there, I'll eat Max's hat."

"And what does the M-o-L mean?" enquired Monica.

Butler produced the guide-book that had been part of his equipment as a tourist, and rapidly flipped over the leaves.

"It's W-F 3's postal address," he answered, and, finding the correct page, read out the entry.

"MOLSBACH-ober-Lindt. Pop. 5,000. Schloss (18th cent.) built by Margraves of Molsbach-Landau. Franziskaner Church (14th cent.), note mural paintings and Gothic candelabra. Interesting chalk quarries 1 m. N. of town. Goldener Adler (15 rooms)."

Butler put down the guide-book. "The chalk quarries may not interest us, but doubtless we shall enjoy the beer at the Goldener Adler. And the mention of five thousand inhabitants doesn't include the thousands of workers in Waffenfabrik 3 who live in a new town of their own a mile or so away. I think our best course is to go there and find out whether Muller and Max have got there first."

"God help the world if they haven't," said Anthony gravely, and turned to Monica.

"Butler and I will go. You'd better stay here."

Monica had left the table and was standing at the window, watching a crowd of children playing in the street. "How can I stay?" she asked.

She came back into the room. "I can't go to the hotel, because Muller will have left men to watch it, and I haven't got my passport so that I can't even go home. Besides, we've got to stick together."

"We might be able to make arrangements . . ." began Butler doubtfully.

Monica shook her head. "I want to do my share," she interrupted him firmly, and with a comical gesture of resignation Butler agreed.

And, although he felt it was all wrong, Anthony felt a sudden pleasure that his advice had not been accepted.

"When do we catch a train?" he asked.

"We don't," answered Butler. "I've still got the papers given me by Marriott, and they're going to be useful. In half an hour I shall be back from visiting one of his clients, and I will bring a car with me."

"You really think Muller is at Molsbach?" queried Monica.

Butler's face was suddenly very grim. "If there's anything in Justice we shall find him there," he answered; and the next moment he had left the room and they could hear him running down the stairs.

They were alone together in the room where Stephen Hayward had paced nervously up and down, pondering whatever secret he had discovered, the secret that had meant his death in a distant English village. Stephen Hayward, the man who had longed to do good in the world, and who had momentarily conquered the weakness of his character to find a greater heroism in the conquest of his fears. If he could see them he must be longing to tell them what it was that he had carried with him to the grave, and Anthony shivered.

"Do you think Captain Butler will be long?" asked Monica.

She had had the advantage of the superior washing accommodation in Stephen's old bedroom, and in some mysterious way had straightened the disorder of her dress so that she looked as fresh and dainty as if she had just stepped out of her own home. Anthony looked at her, noting the nervous tapping of one small foot, and answered reassuringly.

"Butler won't fail," he told her, "and we're bound to win somehow."

He felt very different from the man who had sat all day over a typewriter concocting imaginary adventures. He offered Monica his cigarette case, and as she took a cigarette he noted the slimness of her fingers and the delicate pink of her polished nails. He held a match for her, and she inhaled with a sigh of relief.

"It's waiting with Stephen watching us that is so dreadful," she told him, and he knew that she shared his feelings.

And, though he did not realise it, she had too the memory of those hours in Muller's house, of the madman, and of Muller's eyes as he watched her, to add to her mental discomfort. If Muller were able to wreak his will upon the world the results would be unthinkable.

" We've got to win! " almost whispered Monica.

" We shall," said Anthony again, and Frau Dittmer broke into the silence that followed his words by coming in to clear away the breakfast things.

A very different Frau Dittmer, mollified by a handsome payment, from the woman they had waked up last night. It was Monica who insisted on coming into the tiny kitchen to help her wash up, while Anthony carried out the cups and plates, and they had scarcely finished before there was the blare of a klaxon outside and Butler came into the flat.

" As representatives of Amalgamated Machinery, we are leaving Nuremberg to inspect one or two factories," he announced. " I've borrowed a car for the purpose, and it's waiting outside. We'd better get into it before the children strip everything to the chassis, and we'll stop somewhere on the way to buy suitcases and any clothing we may need."

He turned to Frau Dittmer. " If anyone comes here to ask, perhaps you will remember that you have not seen us."

" Is it likely that I'd look for trouble ? " answered Frau Dittmer scornfully, and with that they left Stephen's old lodgings and set out on the way to Molsbach.

The car was a medium-powered saloon that was slightly past its best, but there was exhilaration in being on the move again and speeding along the perfect surface of the highways of new Germany. Before long they had left the last suburbs of Nuremberg behind them, and were passing through sleepy villages. Once they came to a little town that might have been lifted straight from the seventeenth century, save for the swastika flags and the glass-cased copy of the Jew-baiting newspaper *Der Stuermer* in its market place; and it was just when they had got beyond its outskirts that a tyre suddenly collapsed with a sigh and Anthony, who was driving at the moment, got out.

"Dead flat," he announced. "We shall have to change the wheel."

A fever of haste was on them all, the feeling that they had only a short time and that even now they might be on the wrong trail. In an instant Butler was also out and taking off his coat.

"I hope they've given us a decent set of tools," he said shortly; and with Monica to trundle the removed wheel away while the new one was clamped into position, they made the change in record time.

It all meant delay, however, and the need to borrow a car had caused them to leave Nuremberg later than they had hoped. Monica glanced at the watch on her wrist.

"How much farther is it?" she asked.

"Too far to go without eating. Muller may not allow us time off for meals when once we get there," replied Butler, and at the next village he drew up before the doorway of the whitewashed inn.

There, in the flagged, low-ceilinged common-room, they ate ham and bread and discussed their route.

"I'll get the maps out of the car," suggested Anthony, and leaving the others at table he went into the yard at the side of the inn where the car stood.

A few chickens clucked contentedly as they pecked their way about the cobbles, and the big double gates had been thrown open to admit a wagon. The wagoner was just whipping up his team, and Anthony stood for a moment to watch the picture framed in the gateway, with the quaint old steeple of the church on the far side of the road making a background. It was as he did so that he heard a car coming up very fast.

Its brakes screeched as the driver slowed down to avoid the wagon which was half across the street, and then it slid past the opening at a slower pace, and Anthony caught a glimpse of its two occupants.

There was a chauffeur gazing at the road in front, and beside him a man who was hatless because of the bandage that ringed his head, and whose nose showed signs of injury such as might have been caused by the rim of a bucket of sand. A man who seemed impatient, and who had the scar of a sabre slash across his cheek.

It was Max taking the same road as themselves, and Anthony instinctively moved so that he was hidden by the wagon till the car had passed. Then, picking up the maps he had come to fetch, he went thoughtfully to the inn and threw them on the table.

" We're on the right track," he told them soberly. " Max has just gone by in a big car. It was flying the swastika flag, and he was in a hurry."

" He didn't see you ? " asked Monica.

Anthony shook his head. " I'm almost ready to swear he didn't, but you can't be sure. At any rate he didn't show it."

Butler reached for the maps. " We can't risk it," he said. " Ten to one he missed you, but on the other hand he may be driving on to choose a nice spot for a bit of shooting. We'll have to find another road."

His forefinger hovered over the open sheet and came to rest. " It might be as well, too, if we didn't get to Molsbach until twilight. We don't want any of Muller's friends to see us before we reach the hotel. We'll make a detour, see what we can make out of Waffenfabrik 3 by looking from the road, and arrive like well-conducted tourists aching to see the chalk quarries just when it is too dark for anyone to recognise our faces."

Anthony nodded absently, for he had come to a decision. He had been overruled once, but the time had come to make a stand.

" It all means extra risk, and we can safely leave Monica here until we get back," he said firmly.

Butler cocked an eyebrow. " Do you agree to that, Miss Hayward ? " he enquired.

" If you try to leave me I'll find some way to follow you," answered Monica. " You can't leave me alone."

She turned to Anthony. " You'll let me come too ? "

" If you ask me, he'll be a fool if he doesn't," remarked Butler, and when they left the inn ten minutes later the party was unbroken.

For Monica had looked at Anthony with pleading in her eyes, and he had discovered that a man cannot always have his own way.

The shadows were lengthening when Butler drew up the car on the brow of the line of hills overlooking Molsbach. Far below, the green mansard roofs of the Schloss that dominated the little town rose from encircling trees, the line of its wall and embattled gateways giving an impression of a return to medieval days.

On their right, still in the distance, was a very different scene. They were on a secondary road that ran into the main highway half a mile from Molsbach, and on that highway stood the white reinforced-concrete buildings of Waffenfabrik 3 surrounded by a high wall. Between themselves and the factory stretched a common of ling and pine trees, and where they were they had the neighbourhood entirely to themselves. A dark plume of smoke rose lazily from the tall chimneys of the factory, and still farther away, between the two roads but farther from Molsbach, were the orderly rows of cottages that housed its workmen. The fact that they were separated by a mile of waste land from the parent factory showed that the authorities of Waffenfabrik 3 did not intend their secrecy to be disturbed.

Butler drew a pair of field glasses from the pocket of the car and scanned the buildings.

" There's barbed wire between us and the wall," he said slowly, " and if that isn't the gleam of a bayonet I'll be surprised. They don't encourage visitors in this part of the world."

He opened the car door. " It's ten to one Muller doesn't expect us and will never worry about visitors to the Goldener Adler, but just in case he's suspicious it might be as well if we didn't all arrive at the same time."

" What are you going to do ? " protested Monica.

" I'm going to wait until it's dark and then have a look round," answered Butler. " Until then, I'm going to investigate those houses on our left and see if by any chance one of them is a pub."

The suggestion that they should not all arrive together struck Anthony as wise. If Butler came later and behaved as a stranger to them, they would not be connected together as a party.

"We'll see if everything's all right," he said, "and if the Goldener Adler is safe I'll come out again in the car to fetch you."

He pulled out the map. They had made a big circle to come round to Molsbach, and apart from scattered villages they had been in open country all the way. Behind Waffenfabrik 3 there were only the distant cottages of the workers, and the map showed otherwise a blank, while from Molsbach itself the road climbed steeply to where they were standing, and the other road diverged so that the factory was encircled in two arms. The main road evidently gave access to the factory, and Anthony pointed to it.

"Can you work round there? I'll make some excuse to come back and pick you up just beyond that hill, so that we're hidden from the buildings. If the landlord of the Golden Eagle is curious, I can say you are a scientist who got lost looking for the chalk-pits, and that I found you and offered you a lift."

A sudden doubt came to him, and he turned to Monica. "Or would you rather I stayed with you? You'll have a long wait all alone at the inn."

"Of course you must go. They won't know who I am, and while you're out I might pick up something worth hearing." She smiled reassuringly at Anthony. "You mustn't think I can't look after myself."

"I'm inclined to think that before this is over we shall be glad you're with us," remarked Butler thoughtfully, and seeing a peasant approaching in the distance he waited till the newcomer was hidden by a clump of trees and then set off in the opposite direction from the factory, towards the village in the distance.

The twilight was growing deeper. "We'd better get on," said Anthony at last, and they slid down the hill towards what awaited them at the Goldener Adler.

There was a time when the town of Molsbach-ober-Lindt slept peacefully, with only an occasional rumble from the great world to disturb its slumbers. A time when the Markgraf Fritz von Molsbach-Landau, gilded and sitting in full armour upon his gilded horse, looked down benevolently from the plinth of his statue in the Höhestrasse upon a scene that differed very little from the one to which he had returned from campaigning in the Thirty Years' War. The small celluloid factory that crowned one of the southern hills filled very little of the landscape then. Even the war had only touched them gently, save for the wild months of despair and starvation following the armistice; but lately things had changed, and solid burghers went about their business with pursed lips, discussing nothing that they might not find themselves in trouble.

The old peace had departed. First had come a rumour that the celluloid factory, owned by non-Aryans, had been taken over by the State. Young men in brown shirts were by then marching in the crooked streets of Molsbach, and soon troops had built barbed-wire fences round the factory and hordes of workmen with great concrete mixers had raised the tall white buildings that now dominated the town. And then, as Waffenfabrik 3 grew and a new population filled the workers' quarters beyond it, the little town crouched fearfully in the valley and talked in whispers of what it did not understand.

Was it, as daring men asserted, really a concentration camp, or were those who spoke of it as an arms factory correct? Some of the youths of the town were removed to work upon the Western fortifications; there was a day when the buildings quivered to the rumble of tanks that moved towards the rape of Austria; and even the Goldener Adler, that had seemed to defy change, became somehow different and less welcoming in this more serious world.

Waffenfabrik 3 cast its shadow over the town of the Margraves, and the sunshine vanished. Old Anton Fuchs, who, smoking a betasselled meerschaum pipe, had sold good beer and given hospitality to all men, as had his father and grandfather before him, gave way to a taciturn, thin-lipped man from Prussia who was neither welcoming nor pleasant.

The Goldener Adler still kept its old, gaily painted outer walls, its steep gables, and the cool flagged kitchens and cosy common-rooms inside; but it was no longer the favourite meeting place of Molsbach citizens. Good cheer had given way to cold efficiency, and it was whispered that the landlord was too friendly with the members of the dreaded Gestapo who now shared the little barracks in the renamed Hitlerplatz with the familiar rural police.

Molsbach was like a conquered city, with guards from Waffenfabrik 3 swaggering through the streets as they took their leisure, and every now and then a man who had shown too much interest in the buildings behind the wall upon the hill disappeared suddenly from among his neighbours. It was into this atmosphere of oppression and distrust that Anthony, all unknowing, drove his car; taking it cautiously over the cobbles past the gilded Markgraf Fritz, and stopping outside the porch of the Goldener Adler with a sigh of appreciation for its beauty.

A shambling youth in a blue frock coat and braided cap came forward to take the suitcases that Butler had bought to lend a touch of respectability to their appearance, and, without running the car in to the yard at the side of the inn, Anthony followed Monica into the low-ceilinged entrance-hall.

A door opened at the back, and a man with stooping shoulders and a bald head above a predatory nose emerged and looked at them suspiciously.

"Do you want a meal?" he asked.

"We want rooms for the night," said Monica, and Anthony stepped forward to tell their carefully rehearsed story. This was not the old-world welcome he had expected from the Goldener Adler, but they were in Molsbach at last and they must take what came.

"My sister and I are making for Munich, and we've lost our way," he said easily. "A nuisance, but it's too late to finish the trip to-night, so we thought that we'd stay here. We want a couple of rooms."

The difficult part was yet to come, and he paused before he took the plunge. The landlord, with the wrinkled, shiny skin sloping back from his forehead, his great nose and the sour lines about his mouth, was not an encouraging listener. Anthony and Monica had stopped a mile or so outside the town to remove the hubcap from the near front wheel of the car and hide it under the back seat, and, assuring himself that there was no reason to disbelieve their story, Anthony prepared to tell it.

Monica gave him his cue. "You've got a lovely place here," she told the inn-keeper appreciatively. "My brother wants to go out again, but I tell him it isn't worth the trouble."

"We've lost a hubcap," explained Anthony. "I heard a noise which must have been it going, and didn't realise what it meant. The car's only hired, though, and as we don't want any claims for damages I thought I'd go back and see if I can pick it up."

They had decided that it would be unwise to show any interest in Waffenfabrik 3, and he pointed vaguely towards the farther road down which they had come to Molsbach. "There's a fork about ten miles out, and I believe it happened there."

"I don't know whether I've got rooms to give you," said the landlord slowly.

The light in the hall was dim, and shooting a suspicious glance at Monica and Anthony from beneath his jutting eyebrows he went towards the street. The door of a room at the far side of the hall was thrown open for a moment as a customer came out, giving a glimpse of solid burghers sitting over mugs of beer, but the landlord seemed apart from any sort of good fellowship and ignored the farewell of his parting guest. He switched on a light in the porch and bent forward so that he could see the car.

"The cap's gone all right," he grunted, and came back.

"You are alone?"

"There's just the two of us," agreed Anthony.

"Rooms 8 and 9," decided the landlord unwillingly, and turning round he bellowed to a serving maid to show them upstairs.

It was in Anthony's room that they stood a minute later to discuss their welcome. The bed with its huge eiderdown was scrupulously clean, and in daylight the little room might have been bright and pleasant enough, but as Anthony looked down at Monica he shivered.

"I don't like it," he said in a low voice. "For two pins I'd take you away again and tell Butler it isn't safe here."

"Just because the landlord didn't fall on our necks?" Monica teased him.

She looked into his face, and there was a smile lurking at the corners of her mouth.

"It's very sweet of you, Anthony, but where else could we go?"

"I hate leaving you alone!" cried Anthony vehemently. "Can't you see it's you I'm thinking about? I'd never forgive myself if anything happened to you while Butler and I were away, and . . ."

There was a slight creak from the aged boards of the passage, and Anthony was away from her with a sudden step. He flung open the door.

"Do you want anything?"

Outside stood the landlord. It might be imagination, but it seemed to Anthony that there was a gleam in his eyes that had not been there before. Was it resentment? Or annoyance at being detected? Or was he becoming imaginative, and letting his nerves get the upper hand?

"I've come to see if everything is comfortable," grumbled the landlord.

"We were just saying that we liked the place," Anthony assured him in a tone of finality; and when the man departed he stood waiting until the sound of footsteps had died away. Then, shutting the door again, he went back to Monica.

She had switched on a table-lamp beside the bed; and, as she stood with bowed head looking at the circle of radiance around it, every line of her figure seemed to show utter weariness. She looked to Anthony very small and frail to be left in these surroundings, and the realisation of all that she meant to him rose up in a great wave. Monica looked up and caught his eye, and for a second they stood there thrilling to experience that would have filled a year in normal times, and knowing that life would never be the same for either of them again.

Anthony gave a shaky laugh. "He didn't hear what we were saying: I'm certain of that," he said at last. "But, all the same, I believe he was spying on us. Don't you see that I can't leave you after that?"

After that, and after all that the second's understanding had taught him. Monica, too, seemed shaken when she spoke.

"He only came to see we were all right, and I don't suppose the factory above the town helps him to be genial. It must make the people feel that they're living under a cloud here."

She paused. "In any case, you've got to go. I'm not going to spoil all your plans by keeping you, and we should neither of us be happy again if we didn't do all we could between now and to-morrow evening."

It was a reminder of the date upon the calendar on the wall at Frau Dittmer's, and Anthony nodded.

"I'll go if you wish it," he said simply.

"Do you think it's easy for me either? I won't let you down, though, Anthony," Monica assured him, and the next moment he had plunged forward and somehow, clumsily, taken her into his arms.

For a moment she yielded to him, as she had done in the room in Muller's house in Nuremberg, and then with a little laugh that was full of tenderness she drew away.

"Is that the way brothers usually behave?" she mocked him, and he knew that unless they parted now he would never have the strength to go upon his quest.

And Butler, alone in the darkness, was helpless against the barbed wire and sentries of those great concrete buildings. Whatever was brewing there would perforce boil over, and bring the aftermath of sorrow and ruin that they knew must follow.

" I'll come back for you! " said Anthony.

" I know you will, my dear, and I'll be waiting," answered Monica; and a minute later a very composed brother and sister came down the stairs. For Anthony had remembered that he was still wanted in England as a murderer, and unless he could clear his name he had no right to tell any girl he loved her.

" My brother's off to see if he can find that hubcap," Monica told the inn-keeper.

She came out into the porch, and as she stood watching him leave the man followed her, so that as Anthony looked back a menacing shadow, cast by the lights inside the Goldener Adler, was flung across her and seemed to take the shape of the great bird of prey that gave the inn its name.

CHAPTER TEN

Butler listened until the hum of the car's engine died away in the distance, then turned from the road and struck across country by a path that showed white in the dusk against the heather on either side. So far he had not met anybody, but he quickened his pace so as to put as great a distance between himself and Waffenfabrik 3 as possible.

The roofs he had seen in the distance loomed nearer, and revealed themselves as belonging to the houses of a small village facing a secondary road—almost a track—that Butler judged would circle Molsbach and enter by a gate on the farther side. A glow of light came from the windows of the largest building, a man in rough homespun coat and trousers leaned against the doorpost and flirted loutishly with a girl whose face was hidden in the darkness of the entry; and, realising that he had found the inn he hoped for, Butler strode inside and went up to the counter at the far end of the room.

He did not notice the soldiers until he was inside, but in any case he told himself that they had no reason to suspect him. He merely had to behave like any other visitor to the inn.

"Beer and some cold meat, please," ordered Butler, and sitting down at one of the long tables he started to eat. At the same time, he kept his ears open for any useful information.

A few peasants were gathered near the doorway, and the soldiers were in a position where they could conveniently exchange jokes with the girl behind the counter. The proprietor, leaning his elbows on the woodwork worn smooth with years of scrubbing, continued the conversation where he had left it on Butler's entry.

"There's not so many of you here to-night as usual," he remarked.

He was addressing a couple of N.C.O.s who sat in solitary splendour at a small round table, and one of them, a man with a long red nose and a knowing eye, nodded.

"There won't be as many in future, either," he answered. "A draft was moved out to-day, and nobody knows when any more are coming."

"Gone to the Polish frontier, as like as not," agreed his companion.

Butler took a long drink of beer. The N.C.O. spoke as if he belonged to the garrison of Waffenfabrik 3, and, if they were as shorthanded as he said, it looked as if they might have to relax their guard.

On the other hand, if this were the case, soldiers could hardly be spared to visit the inn. The man with the bulbous nose answered the question almost as if Butler had spoken it aloud.

He was not drunk, but he had had enough to make him talkative. He swilled the beer round in his tankard, and looked solemnly at the result.

"If you ask me," he declared, "there's something funny happening. They're not troubling about patrols like they did, and nearly all the younger men have gone away. Something funny's happening, I tell you."

Unconsciously Butler must have made his interest apparent, for the man suddenly looked round as if he knew that he had been indiscreet. He jumped up, resting both hands on the table in front of him, and bellowed to the soldiers at the other end of the counter.

"What time do you think it is? Get on duty, can't you?" Then, coming over to Butler's table, he very solemnly sat down in the opposite seat and blew a beery breath into Butler's face.

The soldiers, mainly sober, elderly men who felt that they had stayed long enough, pulled on their belts and hitched themselves to their feet. The N.C.O. waited until they had left the inn and then pushed his face forward another inch.

"And who might you be?" he enquired.

"I might be anybody," answered Butler, "but, as a matter of fact, I'm a visitor to Molsbach."

A fragment of his readings in the guide-book came back to him. "I've been looking at your chalk-pits. I don't know whether you're interested in fossils, but I was so engrossed in what I found there that I got caught in the dark. I came here for some food before walking back to my hotel."

The N.C.O. had the air of a prosecuting counsel producing his winning point. "You're not interested in factories?" he asked.

"I prefer fossils," replied Butler.

His questioner tapped the table with a dirty forefinger. "You'd better stick to them," he said. "I've got to go on duty," and rising to his feet he beckoned to his fellow N.C.O. and swaggered out of the inn.

Butler called thoughtfully for another drink. His late acquaintance was scarcely a brilliant conversationalist, but he had at any rate mentioned one or two interesting things.

It was apparently the truth that Waffenfabrik 3 was poorly guarded; and, if so, Butler meant to take advantage of the fact at once. Instead of circling round it, he meant to try to penetrate its secrets that very night.

He waited another ten minutes and then, announcing loudly that he must get back to Molsbach, he went out into the darkness and after walking a hundred yards along the road struck across country towards the factory. A breeze had sprung up and there was a scud of flying cloud across the moon, so that at times he had to pick his way carefully.

A car was coming along the road by which Anthony and Monica had driven into Molsbach, and Butler crouched behind a bush to avoid being spotted in the glare of its headlights. By the sound of its engine, however, it was merely a local tradesman's van, and after it had gone by Butler straightened himself and stepped across the faint white ribbon of road on to the rough heather on the other side.

It was difficult going, with tough branches catching at his ankles and sudden dips and unexpected rabbit holes trying to trip him as he passed, but he kept on steadily, occasionally pausing to take his bearings, until the moon came from behind the clouds and he flung himself upon his face.

He could almost have touched the barbed-wire fence round Waffenfabrik 3, and just on the far side of it he had seen the glint of moonlight on a bayonet! The rift in the clouds had come as suddenly as if someone had switched on a light, and Butler held his breath while he peered at the sentry from between the tufts of heather.

" Sleeping Beauty, or the Sergeant Major's Despair," he murmured to himself.

The man leaned on his rifle with his shoulders hunched, and although he appeared to be gazing over the heath it was obvious that his thoughts were very far away. It would have needed a much noisier approach than Butler's to have roused him from his dreams of bed, or wine, or of the girl he meant to marry, and he never moved.

In a way he reminded Butler of a youthful visit to Madame Tussaud's, when an aunt with a misguided sense of humour had assured him that one of the attendants was a waxwork. His comments on the supposed model's appearance and lack of lifelike attributes had roused the attendant to indignation and brought down unmerited punishment on his own head, and ever since then he had regarded men who went into trances while on duty with distinct suspicion.

They had a habit of suddenly waking to extreme vigilance, and Butler stayed exactly where he was. A bat swooped down so that it almost brushed against the sentry's face, and with a grunt the man stirred. He looked keenly over the heath and then, apparently satisfied, shouldered his rifle and marched off along the inside of the wire fence.

"I want to be alo-o-one," moaned Butler to himself; and, turning in the opposite direction to that taken by the sentry, he crept along parallel to the barbed wire.

On the far side of it the heather ran on again for perhaps fifty feet, and then there was a high wall. There would be time enough to worry about that when he got to it, however, and as Butler crept cautiously on he realised that he was nearing the angle of the fence.

The wire turned at right angles and ran off into the darkness, but just before the corner there was a smudge across the heather caused by the ruts of a cart track that ran straight up to a gap in the fence. And standing just on the far side of that gap was another sentry.

The marks of wheels seemed to be new, and the opening was only temporary. Butler did not want to pass it, only to find the rest of the fence unbroken, but he was not prepared for the shout on the far side of the wall that drew the sentry's attention.

The shout came from the direction of the factory, and the sentry stopped uncertainly on his beat. It was repeated, and after looking round swiftly to see that the space beyond the gap was empty he finally made up his mind and went off at the double towards the sound of the disturbance.

At that moment, with blinding suddenness, another cloud passed in front of the moon, and everything was in darkness.

" Good," said Butler, and crouching as low as possible he sprinted through the gap and kept on running until he fell down under the deeper shadow of the wall. The sentry might be back at any moment, and he had looked the sort of man who would shoot first and ask questions afterwards.

Waffenfabrik 3 was quiet, but not asleep. On the far side of the wall Butler could hear the hum of machinery, and a sudden shower of sparks came from the tall chimney as someone stoked the furnace beneath. Within that circling wall, Butler guessed, men were working night and day to turn out the engines of destruction that they kept so secret. A new type of gun, a metal that would give that extra lightness to bombers that would make all the difference between an abortive raid or a shower of bombs on London. All being made ready for the day when Germany's leader would unleash them.

A day, too, that was very near, and Butler shook himself impatiently. What could he, alone inside the ring fence, and Anthony and Monica at the Goldener Adler, accomplish against the powers that they were facing? . . . But it was no use thinking that, or he would simply stay where he was until he was captured.

"I never did like Muller's face," murmured Butler inconsequently, and moved off towards the sleepy sentry.

He had only gone a few yards when the idea came to him. Guards have to be relieved, and if only the man had gone off into another of his trances there might be just a chance. Taking fresh bearings, and noting that the clouds were thinning again, so that he must act quickly, Butler struck off in a straight line towards the spot where he judged the man would be.

The man never knew that anybody was near him until muscular hands closed round his throat from behind and he was pulled inexorably backwards, while his assailant wriggled round so that a hard knee descended on his victim's chest. It was so easy that it could hardly be called a struggle, and five minutes later Butler was tying up the man with his own braces, after removing his uniform for other use.

The sentry, his feet and ankles securely tied and a handkerchief jammed into his mouth, was blissfully unconscious. Butler struggled into the tunic, trousers and boots that were a thought too large for him, took up the rifle, and stood up to all intents and purposes a member of the garrison of Waffenfabrik 3. Then, dragging his victim into the shadows beneath the wall, he sloped arms and took up a measured pacing beside the barbed-wire fence.

He had no idea whether he was supposed to meet another sentry at each end of his beat, but judging from his victim's habits they would not be surprised if he failed to turn up as expected. Butler stopped occasionally and even appeared to go into a trance for the benefit of those who might see him, and when the moon finally gave up the struggle and went behind an unbreakable bank of cloud he realised that he had done the only thing that could save him from discovery.

It was pitch dark, and with startling suddenness searchlights glared out from the four angles of the wall and swept its length so that nobody could pass unseen. The unconscious sentry was hidden in the shadow, but if Butler had been standing up in his ordinary clothes he would have been discovered instantly.

The precaution was apparently a mere routine, for Butler could now see the sentry beyond him and noticed that he did not even trouble to look round. The workers, housed on their own secluded estate and riddled with spies and secret agents, would never dare to betray any secrets, and Waffenfabrik 3 was running no risk of intrusion from outside. Butler continued his pacing, and was fortunate in that he had only a quarter of an hour before his relief appeared.

It was a quarter of an hour that seemed a year, but at the end of it a corporal with a file of men came along the path inside the fence. They passed the other sentry first, and Butler could watch the procedure in the reflection from the searchlights. He breathed a prayer of thankfulness and paced on.

There was no need for him to challenge. The patrol came up, the corporal tapped him on the shoulder while scarcely troubling to look at him, and as the front man of the file fell out Butler joined in at the rear and they moved off. He was, apparently, the last sentry on their round; for, skirting the wall, they marched along two sides of it until they came to the road.

They had come to big double gates, with lights trained down on them to cover all approach. The patrol was admitted without question, and as they got inside the sudden contrast between the dimly lighted courtyard and the blinding glare without gave Butler his chance.

He left the file as unobtrusively as a shadow and slipped into the cover of the wall. Then, assuming an air of being there on business, he strode off towards the block of buildings opposite. They had more the appearance of offices than the rest of the factory, and Butler's chief desire at the moment was to find a hiding place. He was inside the place at last, and would not worry about getting out again until the need arose. He had not, however, expected the corporal to notice his absence as quickly as he did.

There was a sudden shout, and the sound of running footsteps. Lights snapped on in the building opposite, and the searchlights on the gate were swung round to throw their glare into the yard.

" I wouldn't like to pay their electricity bill! " said Butler, and making the best of a bad job he walked straight on as if nothing unusual was happening.

The main door of the offices in front of him swung open and a man stepped out with a revolver in his hand.

" Captain Butler, I believe? " he asked in a bland voice.

The man came a step nearer. " I was expecting the honour of your visit, but I must confess that for the last twenty minutes I have been wondering whether you would disappoint me."

The revolver pointed straight at Butler's heart, and soldiers were running from the guardhouse at the gate. The position was obviously hopeless.

" Good evening, Dr. Muller. How are the Friends of Peace? " answered Butler amiably, and dropping the rifle he had purloined from the sentry he put his hands above his head and stepped forward.

" Has anyone else been stealing your wallet since we were in Nuremberg ? "

" I contrive, Captain Butler, to guard what is my own," retorted Muller, and motioning to the soldiers to bring their prisoner after him, he led the way into what was apparently a general office, for it contained rows of desks and shrouded typewriters.

Muller sat down. " I have been looking forward to this visit ever since our dear Max lost his factory permit; and, preferring to have you in my own hands rather than running free outside, I made arrangements to invite you in. Sergeant Pfeifer informed me that you had swallowed his story of our being poorly guarded and that you had every appearance of intending to break in, and as soon as you reached the gap in our wire fence the sentry was called away as I arranged. After that we lost you for a little time, but from your costume it appears that you have been talking with one of our guards."

" The fellow was asleep on duty," agreed Butler, " and we had quite a gripping conversation."

" And Miss Hayward and our young friend Anthony Wayne are in good health ? " asked Muller.

It was said in ordinary conversational tones, but Butler blinked. It was humiliating to think that he had walked like any novice into a carefully baited trap, but somehow he must see that Anthony and Monica did not suffer the same fate. His host's voice flowed smoothly on and took away the last hope.

" They should arrive here shortly. The landlord of the Goldener Adler informs me that Miss Hayward is already in his hands, and as soon as Mr. Wayne returns from a moonlight trip in his car they will be brought here together."

Butler took out his cigarette case. " You haven't caught Anthony yet, then," he said, keeping his voice level.

" A mere matter of time, my dear Captain Butler," replied Muller.

He rose from his seat. " We will, I think, lock you up safely until they arrive."

Butler was led out of the room. . . . It was at the same time that Anthony, having waited at their rendezvous for almost an hour, decided that there must be a hitch somewhere and turned his car towards Molsbach.

He was not unduly worried, for he had no doubt that Butler could look after himself. He wondered, however, whether Monica was tired of waiting for them.

He little knew what had been happening in Molsbach. The landlord of the Goldener Adler was not a man to inspire confidence in those who spoke to him, but after Anthony's car had turned the corner he looked at Monica and gave her what he no doubt intended to be an ingratiating smile.

" I hope the Herr will find what he is looking for," he said. " The Fräulein will take supper now? "

Something in the empty hall behind him made Monica forget all the beer drinkers in the side room. The Goldener Adler had lost all traces of the welcome it used once to give to hungry travellers, and she suppressed a shiver.

" I'll have it in half an hour," she decided, forcing herself to speak lightly. " My brother should be back by then."

" I will make arrangements for his return," replied the landlord, still watching her with unwinking eyes, and there was something in his voice that did not ring quite true and gave his words a double meaning.

" Until then I will do my best to make the Fräulein comfortable."

" I—I'm sure you will," said Monica, and turning from him went towards the staircase. Better the sanctuary of her own room than staying with the innkeeper. She would have sought the company of the beer drinkers if only she had dared to meet them, but her confidence was shaken and until Anthony and Butler returned it was her duty to avoid notice.

And of what importance, Monica asked herself when once upstairs, were the words of a boorish landlord? She shook herself impatiently, and taking the brush she had bought that morning from her new suitcase sat down before the mirror.

" You're letting your imagination run away with you," she told her reflection severely, and raising her arm proceeded to brush the golden waves of her hair with nervous strokes.

The mirror showed her head and slim shoulders, but behind them the rest of the bedroom was a cave of darkness. The small standing lamp on the dressing-table barely lighted these shadows, and going across to the window Monica opened the casement and looked out.

The moon shone down on a cobbled yard. In one corner stood a wagon, its shafts pointing to the skies, and under a lean-to shed she could see the outline of a car. Under the high wall beside the shed there was a patch of deeper shadow, and as she watched it was relieved by a small red point of light that glowed and dimmed and glowed again with patient regularity.

A man was standing there smoking a cigarette, and Monica judged that he was looking up at her window.

" It must be some man waiting for one of the maids!" she told herself angrily, and closing the casement again she drew the curtains and went to the door of the room.

" I won't be scared. Is there a bathroom anywhere about? "

Half an hour later, a girl who looked wonderfully refreshed and who did not appear to have a care in the world came downstairs, and as she reached the hall the ungainly porter stepped forward with an eager smile upon his face. For in his soul he was an artist, and here was someone who, by merely letting him see her, could give him far more than any of the prosaic visitors or commercial travellers who visited the inn nowadays could offer when they gave him tips.

" The Gnädiges Fräulein will find supper ready," he announced, and opened a door with a flourish. He was the first person to speak pleasantly to her since she and Anthony had come to Molsbach, and Monica rewarded him with a smile.

" Thank you. Is my brother back yet? "

The hall porter had known the Goldener Adler in its happier days. His father had been steward to a local family which had lost everything in the dark days of the inflation, and whose last representative had suffered for his allegiance to the semi-monarchist Stahlhelm shortly after the Nazis came into power. He had no affection for the present regime or for his Prussian employer, and was one of those citizens of Molsbach who spoke in whispers against the tyranny of the big factory that overlooked the town, and at the moment he was torn by a great emotion.

He might be a shambling youth with a large head, and sloping shoulders that made him look absurd in his present uniform, but in his struggle the hall porter of the Goldener Adler was one with the ancient heroes of German mythology. He had dreamed of beauty and for it he was prepared to risk his life.

" Dinner is served," repeated the porter mechanically, and then he leaned forward with sudden determination and whispered into Monica's ear. He did not know whether she needed the warning, but he knew the risk he was running and was prepared to take it with open eyes.

" The Herr is not back yet, and the Fräulein should know that the police are waiting for him. I think . . ."

The figure of the landlord appeared from the kitchens, and the porter suddenly straightened. His voice changed.

" If the Fräulein will step inside and eat——"

" I—I don't think I will just yet," answered Monica.

Her brain was working at racing speed, and she turned away from the hall porter as if she were completely dismissing him from memory. She looked straight at the landlord.

" As my brother hasn't turned up yet I think I'll go for a walk."

" The Fräulein will have her meal," replied the landlord. He came nearer to Monica and stood towering over her, his shoulders hunched and his hands opening and closing as if he would have liked to enforce his orders by pushing her into the room. Apparently he did not suspect the porter, however, and this was a mere precaution to keep her under his care. Underlying his manner there was a hint of fear at what the consequences would be if he should let her escape.

" It's not a fit night for walking," he growled, and there was a note of menace in his voice that Monica pretended not to catch.

" Perhaps you're right," she agreed with a shrug, and turning away from him she went into the dining-room through the door that the hall porter still held open.

In the centre of the room stood a round mahogany table with a central foot, and it was obvious that this was not the usual dining-room of the inn. There was one small window that Monica guessed looked on to the yard she had seen earlier, and the place had a chill feeling as if it were seldom used.

"I'll see about your meal," grunted the landlord, and presently it was brought to her by a waiter of incredible age who clearly shared none of the feelings of the hall porter, and who indeed was only concentrating on the injustice of having to serve dinner in two rooms at once. He laid the table quickly, put down a plate of soup, and shuffled out.

Monica sat down and forced herself to eat a little, and when the door opened again to admit the landlord she was glad that she had taken the precaution.

Like herself, he seemed to be straining his ears to catch the hum of Anthony's returning car, but whereas she managed to force a smile his brow was clouded over and he scarcely troubled to be civil.

"Are you all right?" he growled.

"Perfectly, thank you," answered Monica, and as soon as the door had closed again she left her meal and tiptoed over to the window.

The room was built in the shape of a letter L, and the window was in the arm that ran at right angles to the main part of the room, so that there was only a dim reflection from the light that hung above the table. Monica switched off even that and pulled back the curtain.

The window looked out, as she had guessed, upon the yard; and as she looked instinctively at the lean-to shed she saw again the ominous glowing of a cigarette. The watcher, if watcher he was, still lingered at his post.

Monica glanced at her wrist-watch. It was well over an hour since Anthony had left her, two and a half since they had dropped Butler on the heath near

Waffenfabrik 3. They must be due back at almost any moment, and if Anthony brought Butler with him they would all fall into a trap that would mean the end of everything.

It would mean that even the faint chance they now had of stopping Muller's schemes would be gone for ever; and, as she remembered her late captor's talk of the war that Germany would win, Monica suddenly felt cold. In England lay the only chance of peace and security for the world, and if once she and France were beaten there would be no more hope for Europe. Freedom was at stake, and they knew nothing of how the attack would come.

Molsbach was very quiet. In the distance a train was shunting fussily on the little branch line that served the town, once or twice footsteps sounded as they passed the open gate of the courtyard, and once Monica's heart leaped in terror as a car approached and she waited for it to stop and for Anthony and Butler to walk into the trap.

There was nothing she could do to warn them. Nothing. Another car sounded in the distance and drew nearer, and as it seemed to slow down on approaching the inn, Monica gripped the window-sill with all her strength and waited.

The watcher, too, thought that this was the car he expected, and in his excitement did not remain at his post. There was a little arc of light as the cigarette was thrown away, a figure came out of the shadows and passed through the gateway into the street, and as the car gathered speed again and swept past the Goldener Adler, Monica seized her chance.

She climbed on to the window-sill and remained there for a second, unconscious that her right hand was bleeding where she had torn it on a nail, then, without considering how far she might have to fall, she dropped into the yard.

As she landed, she heard the watcher returning. There was only one hiding place in the whole yard, and running silently across the cobbles Monica threw herself over the back of the empty wagon and fell breathless into a thin layer of straw at the bottom.

She had hardly got there before a light was switched on in her late dining-room and the landlord's head appeared at the window. He waved wildly to the watcher.

" Has anybody got out of here ? " he bellowed.

The man in the yard did not want to admit that he had left his station even for a moment. Besides, he had only been in the street outside, and the yard was obviously empty.

" Nobody," he answered firmly.

" Come round to the front. That damned girl's got away! " instructed the landlord, and as the watcher dashed off Monica again dropped over the tail of the wagon.

It was useless to try the street, for the man had already gone that way to join the landlord. At one end of the lean-to, however, there was a pile of boxes; and climbing insecurely on to these Monica managed to reach the top of the wall which backed on to a narrow alley. She let herself drop to the full length of her arms, and landed without falling. Then, turning in the opposite direction from the main street, she ran blindly away.

Before they started, Butler had made them carefully study the plan of Molsbach in his guide-book, but it was more by luck than judgment that Monica came to one of the old, bastioned gates. She recognised it as the one through which they had entered the town, and walked out again as soberly as if she were merely taking the air. She was now on the road that led directly to Waffenfabrik 3, and hoping to stop Anthony before he took the car into Molsbach she ran on through the darkness.

It was pitch dark, and the wind sounded eerily in the trees that bordered the road. Monica went on, stumbling a little, for she had wrenched one ankle in her struggle to climb the wall, but as she looked ahead eagerly she could not see any signs of an approaching car.

Anthony and Butler were far behind schedule. Monica kept wearily on, and her thoughts were so full of the warning she had to give them that she did not hear the running footsteps behind until they were almost on her. Then, just as she realised that she must leave the road and try to shake off her pursuers in the fields, headlights appeared over a rise in front of her, and abandoning all caution she stepped straight into their glare and waved.

There could only be one saloon car, a car with two male occupants, passing that way at that time. Monica stood there until the car was almost on her, and then there was a screech of brakes and the saloon slithered to a stop. Sobbing breathlessly and almost crying with relief, she caught hold of the door.

" A trap! " she gasped. " They're after us! "

" God in Heaven, it's the girl! " came an astonished voice from the car, and with a suddenly sinking heart Monica realised that she had made a mistake.

The saloon was driven by a chauffeur, and beside him sat Max.

It was too late now to do anything. The landlord of the Goldener Adler pelted up, accompanied by two men, and Max dismounted from the car.

"How did you let her get away?" he asked angrily, and the lean, beak-nosed man wilted. "Lucky for you we caught her, or you'd have found yourself in trouble."

He caught hold of Monica's arm and gave it a savage twist.

"So you thought you'd warn the others, eh? Where have they got to?"

The grip on her arm was agony, but as Max released it and she was able to stand upright Monica shook her head.

"I don't know what you mean," she answered.

She made a great effort, and her voice was as steady as if she had not been caught again by the men who meant to bring about her death.

"I don't know anything about the others. I only wanted to get away."

The landlord of the Goldener Adler nodded. He was anxious to minimise his blunder as much as possible, and the idea of facing Max's employer in the same temper as Max did not appeal to him at all.

"Like enough," he growled. "I don't know how she guessed we were watching her, but she was much too scared to worry about the others."

"You may be right," admitted Max, and paused a moment. "At any rate, we already have Captain Butler."

It was bad news, but it meant at least that Anthony was still free. Monica's dash to warn them had not been absolutely useless, and even as she realised it there was the sound of a car coming towards them from the direction of Waffenfabrik 3. Again headlights flashed over the rise in the road, and Monica started to struggle as if her nerves had suddenly given way at last.

"Let me go!" she pleaded.

The men closed round her, and her voice rose to a scream. "Let me go! You've caught Captain Butler, and you've caught me, but there's still one of us free. Go away and leave me alone!"

"Hit the bitch in the mouth if she says any more. There's a car coming," ordered Max savagely.

"Leave me alone and go away!" cried Monica with a last effort, and then a hand crashed into her lips and she was silenced.

The oncoming saloon had slowed down. They could see that the driver was alone, and after a moment's indecision he decided to go on. His car gathered speed as it passed them, he swung into a track that left the road in the opposite direction from the factory, and the glimmer of his tail light dwindled in the distance.

"Going to one of the farms," said the landlord of the Goldener Adler with relief in his voice. "He was far too terrified to do anything, and he'll not tell anyone what he's seen."

He turned to Max. "We'll go back."

"On the contrary," contradicted Max, "you will come with me to account for your negligence to the Chief."

The momentary relief had acted on Max also. His grip relaxed, and with a sudden, supple twist Monica was free. She ducked under the arm of one of the men, scrambled desperately up the bank at the side of the road, and ran, and ran. . . .

Behind her the men leapt in pursuit. Monica ran until she caught her foot in a tussock of grass in the darkness, and then she lay breathlessly, praying that she might not be seen.

But, at any rate, she knew that Anthony had been the driver of the second car, and that he had heeded the warning she shouted to him as he approached.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE light saloon bucked and plunged on the uneven track, but Anthony clung grimly to the wheel and drove on at a steady speed that would not attract attention. It had been a dreadful moment when, after deciding not to wait for Butler any longer, he had come over the rise in the road to find Monica held by a crowd of men. His first impulse had been to pull up and rush to help her, but reason had told him that it would be useless, and then she had shouted the warning that was obviously intended for his ears.

"Leave me alone and go away!" Monica had cried, and against his whole inclination Anthony had driven on. He had passed by as if nothing were happening, and had taken the first side turning that he saw.

Now he was alone, with Monica and Butler prisoners, and so far as he could see there was nothing he could do to help them. He put on speed in the hope of finding somewhere to hide the car.

The track was steadily growing worse. At one place it forked, and Anthony took the lane that branched away from Molsbach, only to find that it dwindled almost to nothing. It may have been this fact that made him think a split-second faster than usual, but when he saw the railings ahead he acted almost before he realised what they were.

They were wooden palings that were painted a vivid white in his headlights, and exactly in the middle of them hung a notice.

ACHTUNG!

LEBENSGEFÄHRLICH

Anthony wrenched the wheel over so that he left the track and bumped across the grass, his near wing grazed the fence, and then the car nose-dived into a hollow and turned slowly over with its wheels spinning uselessly in the air.

The steering column dug hard into Anthony's chest. He felt as if the whole world had risen up and fallen on his head, and as he remained there he was only conscious of a vague thankfulness that the car had not caught fire. Then, moving very carefully, he managed to struggle out of his seat and grope for the door.

" I'm not dead yet! " said Anthony, and climbing on to the grass he limped painfully towards the fence. The moon came out for an instant from behind the clouds, and in its radiance he saw what lay beyond.

" ' Dangerous to life ' is a good description," he went on, with a memory of the notice, and shuddered.

Below him, going sheer down to a sullen pool of water, was a white cliff. It was one of the famous chalk-pits that were the pride of Molsbach, and another yard would have sent Anthony crashing over to his death.

Anthony sat on a stone and was very sick. Then, feeling slightly better, he staggered to his feet.

His head still throbbed painfully, but when he investigated the damage he found that it was nothing worse than a rapidly growing lump. His twisted ankle was only a slight strain, so that he could already put his weight upon the foot, but he was dangerously near to Waffenfabrik 3 and was in a strange country.

Muller held Monica and Butler, and he was playing on his own ground. He was engaged in activities of of which some at least of the Nazi authorities disapproved; but Molsbach was a long way from Berlin, or even Munich, and with the memory of the S.S. men who had helped Muller at Nuremberg Anthony felt that to try to explain matters to the police would probably mean that he had given himself into Muller's hands.

And who would take the word of an Englishman who was wanted for murder and was travelling with a false passport, against that of the director of Waffenfabrik 3? He would have about as much chance of rescuing Monica and Butler like that as he would have of doing it by appealing to their captor's better feelings.

There was only one course to take. Waffenfabrik 3 was a formidable nut to crack, with its barbed wire and its gateway swept by searchlights, but Anthony must try to get inside it and avoid being seen. If he could find any evidence of what Muller meant to do next day, and if he could get out again safely, the knowledge might form a lever which would force the police to action.

" Anyhow, I might as well join the others," Anthony remarked with grim humour; and, finding that his ankle was now feeling much stronger, he cast one last look at his wrecked car lying beside the chalk-pit and went back along the track towards the road.

His watch had miraculously escaped injury, and, looking at it, Anthony realised that it was past midnight and that they had already started on the fatal day. He put on pace and then, at the sound of footsteps in the distance, took shelter in a clump of trees.

The countryside round Molsbach was not populous, and the workers' estate was on the far side of Waffenfabrik 3, but more than once that night he was forced to hide. A late-wandering peasant trudged past with bent head; a man on some illegal errand saw him first and turned tail before Anthony had fully realised he was there; and once a youth who evidently worked at the factory passed with a girl with whom he was too engrossed to bother about passers-by.

The wind had died away and it was very dark. A church bell in Molsbach struck the hour of three, and the chimes were repeated again and again from the four churches of the little town until the great bell of the Rathaus chimed the hour. At last Anthony reached the main road, and a glow over the brow of the hill marked the position of Waffenfabrik 3. He began to walk towards it while he decided on the next step.

As a matter of fact, there was nothing to do but go on and trust to luck. He had passed the entrance on his way to the meeting place with Butler, noting the gateway and the high wall stretching out of sight on either side, the barbed wire, and the searchlights that beat down on all lines of approach. It was no use planning anything in the face of such obstructions, and there seemed as little chance of getting in by any means as there was of Monica and Butler making their escape. Anthony went on cautiously, and reached the top of the hill.

Three men—if he had only known it, they were the landlord of the Goldener Adler and his helpers returning home after an unpleasant interview with Muller—passed by on their way to Molsbach; and it was ten minutes later, when he was almost level with the factory gateway, that Anthony heard a low rumble coming from the opposite direction.

It was a rumble suggestive of a heavy goods train, but the railway line serving Molsbach was on the other side of the town. Whatever it was, it demanded investigation; and keeping under cover at the side of the road Anthony crept on until he was in the blackness at the very edge of the factory's lights. The rumble grew louder, and he recognised what it was.

Along the road came a train of lorries. They were heavily loaded and were almost head to tail, and as the leading lorry drew level with the gates of Waffenfabrik 3 the procession halted.

Their arrival was evidently expected, for the gates opened and a couple of guards came out and glanced carelessly at the papers handed them by a man who had jumped out of the leading lorry. The N.C.O. raised his voice to be heard over the noise of the running engines, and a chance breeze wafted his words to Anthony's ears.

"How many to-night?" he asked.

"Eighteen, but one will be late. It had a breakdown five miles back," answered the leader of the convoy.

"Eighteen," echoed the N.C.O., and waving the procession forward he stood aside and counted the lorries as they rolled past.

Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. . . . The gates closed behind them, and Anthony saw a ray of hope. He wriggled a little closer to the lighted area.

If he could get just beyond the gateway he would come to a ruined cottage on the near side of the road. It was a mere shell of four walls, and had most likely been abandoned when its owner was evicted to secure the privacy of Waffenfabrik 3, but it bordered the white ribbon of road and it made a patch of darkness in which he could crouch. And, more important still, Anthony judged that the last lorry would halt beside it when it finally arrived.

After that, things must be left to chance. Anthony crouched motionless for a minute as a dry twig snapped under his weight, and then went cautiously onward. Another ten yards, and he was safely beneath the crumbling wall and listening tensely for the sound of the approaching lorry.

It came at last. Not the sweet hum of an engine in perfect running order, but obviously patched up to make the rest of the journey and travelling with a succession of earsplitting explosions. The bulk of it loomed up above him, and Anthony realised exultantly that he had been right. The driver pulled up opposite him and sounded his horn.

Neither he nor his mate got down, and Anthony acted quickly. A sentry had come out of each side of the gateway, but only one came forward while the other stood on guard. The headlights of the lorry were very powerful, and its load was covered by a tarpaulin that overhung the body and made a strip of shadow. The only hope was that the man by the gate would be dazzled and see little by the dim light in the courtyard; and moving very quickly Anthony leaped from his shelter and reached the lorry in three noiseless steps.

The tarpaulin was held in place by lacings that stretched to eyelets in the sides. Anthony grabbed at a couple of these cords and found a grip, swung his legs under the lorry, and got a foothold on one of the struts of the chassis. Then, lowering himself to the full extent of his arms, he crouched as far as possible under the body. As he did so, the second sentry grew tired of waiting and retired inside the yard.

"Number eighteen, and I've had a breakdown," reported the driver.

The guard did not trouble himself further. " Carry on," he ordered, motioning the lorry forward, and with a grinding of gears and a jerk that nearly threw Anthony from his perch, they rumbled through the gateway and on to the cobbles of the yard inside.

Anthony held his breath, expecting every moment to hear a shout, while the flesh between his shoulder blades crept uncomfortably at the thought of the sentry's bayonet. Nothing happened, however, and the lorry went steadily onwards to where the rest of the convoy was unloading at the far side of the courtyard.

To the right of the gateway was the guard-house, and on its left stood a store-room of some kind, with beyond it a line of sheds that backed on to the outer wall. The lorry passed out of sight of the sentries, and Anthony saw with relief that the store-room cast a deep shadow in front of the sheds. He let go his grip and rolled into shelter, and for a moment lay bruised and panting where he had fallen.

He was inside Waffenfabrik 3. On either side of the yard was a line of modern concrete buildings with lighted windows through which he could see moving belts and hear the steady hum of machinery. Behind him were the sheds, but in front, at the far end of the yard, stood an older building of brick that had the air of being part of the original celluloid factory that had occupied the site. Anthony got shakily to his feet.

" So you thought you'd get away with it, did you ? " demanded a voice, and before he could do anything a hand descended heavily on his shoulder and swung him round.

" What were you doing on that lorry ? "

The man was a sturdy Bavarian in dungarees. He stood a couple of inches taller than Anthony and was proportionately broader, and the rolled-up sleeves of his shirt revealed muscles that moved under the skin as if he were in perfect training. His grip, too, showed that if he wished he could have lifted Anthony and carried him like a baby.

" What are you doing here ? " he again demanded with a shake; and realising that fight was useless, Anthony tried hard to gather his scattered wits.

" That's what I'd like to know! " he answered, and managed to bring a note of indignation into his voice. " I pinched a lift, hoping that the lorry was going to Munich, and when I woke up I was landed here. I jumped off because I didn't want to get into trouble, and now all I want is to go away."

" You'll get into trouble all right," remarked his captor ominously.

Anthony wriggled a little. " What is this place, anyway ? " he asked.

" Are you a German ? " demanded the man in dungarees.

" I'm from the province of Bohemia," answered Anthony, hoping against hope that the man had never heard a genuine Czech speaking. " Sudeten German, of course, and I've always been a party man."

He changed his tone. " I suppose you couldn't give me a bed for the night and a bit of food ? "

" If I wasn't so busy," retorted his captor, " I'd take you to the Chief."

The man was evidently a foreman. He removed one hand from Anthony and scratched his own head. " I've got my work to do, though, and we can't stand here for ever."

Anthony's suggestion that he would like food and a bed seemed to have reassured him slightly and he made up his mind. The door of the shed nearest to them stood ajar, and he urged his prisoner towards it.

" I'll tell the Chief about you later," he decided, and thrusting Anthony inside he shut the door and turned the key.

Anthony was still very shaky, and once again he fell to the floor in a heap. Then, picking himself up, he stood for a minute swaying uncertainly and feeling that he was beaten. The Chief, presumably, was Muller; and, if that was so, he would be more than pleased to renew their acquaintance when the foreman mentioned Anthony next morning. It looked as if there were no possible means of avoiding the meeting.

If Anthony could have known what was going on outside he might have felt a little happier. The unloading of the lorries was going on smoothly, parts for the guns from another factory being fed on to a moving band that took them inside the machine sheds for assembling, and after watching for a minute the foreman decided that, after all, he would tell the Chief about his capture straight away. He went to the office buildings at the far end of the yard and entered by a small door towards one side.

In front of him was a corridor, and the place should have been occupied by Dr. Muller and his personal staff. It was, however, strangely silent, and the Bavarian, who, though a slow thinker was difficult to shift once he had made up his mind, went to the door at the end of the passage.

There was no answer to his knock, and he went into the room only to start back with a grunt of surprise. For instead of the orderly desk and furniture he had expected, he saw a pile of straw-filled packing cases in the centre of the floor while over in the corner there were tins. . . .

Startled by a quick footstep behind him the foreman swung round. He found himself looking straight into the face of Max, and what he saw in the eyes of Muller's secretary made even the stout Bavarian take a pace backwards.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Max fiercely. "Haven't you had strict orders that this part of the building is private?"

The Bavarian nodded. There was short shrift for men who made mistakes in Waffenfabrik 3; and thinking of his prisoner he had forgotten the new regulation that had just been issued as important. He shifted his feet uneasily.

"I'm sorry, Herr Max," he excused himself. "I forgot. There's a man in the factory——"

The door of the room was still open, and Max did not seem to be listening to him. He was looking past the foreman at the disorder inside.

"If the Chief knew you'd been disobeying him, you'd regret it for the rest of your life," he snapped. "You're Schacht, aren't you? You're a decent worker, so I'll give you another chance."

Standing near Muller in authority as he did, his words were not to be ignored. The foreman could not understand why he had done anything wrong by glancing into an empty room, but Max's voice had chilled him and left him powerless to think.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he murmured again.

Max closed the room door and led the way to the courtyard. The first of the lorries had finished unloading and was about to leave, and he pointed to it.

"The consignments they're sending us aren't big enough. Go in that lorry and have a talk to them about it. If there's any trouble, ring us up here. And you're not to speak to anyone before you go."

"But it will mean my wasting three days," protested the foreman, and in his amazement at being ordered to leave urgent work to undertake a task that any clerk from the office could do as well he found his voice again.

" Can't you send somebody else, Herr Max? I've got a lot to do, and all I came to tell you was that——"

Max took him by the arm. " Go on that lorry," he hissed. " Go on that lorry and don't talk any more. And if you mention what you've seen to-night either when you get back in three days' time or in the rest of your life, you'll be very sorry."

His face was working, and his eyes blazed as he looked at the unhappy foreman. " Do you remember Walther, who was sent to Dachau? You'll pray every night that you may be given the same fate."

There was no more fight left in the big Bavarian. " I—I'll go at once, Herr Max," he answered; and forgetting his work and the fact that he had come to report a prisoner, forgetting everything save that he had a wife and small children and that somehow his offence threatened them as well as himself, he took his seat in the driving cab of the lorry. The driver let in his clutch, and they rattled out of the yard.

A man who might guess too much had been got rid of until after the important moment, and Max turned away to attend to other things. And, although he did not know it, he had ensured that Anthony's presence would remain unknown to anyone inside Waffenfabrik 3.

Not that Anthony was able to make any use of his opportunity. He had tried the door and found that it was securely locked, and after barking his shins on a number of unseen objects and deciding that it was unsafe to light a match he seated himself on what felt like the edge of a crate to wait for daylight.

Slowly, so slowly that at first it seemed an illusion, the light came. The shed had no windows, air being admitted through a crack near the roof caused by the omission of the top board along the front, but gradually a chill grey light crept into the shed and Anthony was able to see where he was.

The shed looked as if it belonged to the handyman of Waffenfabrik 3. A dilapidated set of overalls hung on a hook, and the shelves surrounding the walls were littered with small parts of machinery, old newspapers, a mouldy piece of cheese, several empty tins, and, surprisingly, a weary fern in a broken flower pot. A pile of oily rags lay in one corner, and Anthony's seat turned out to be a half-opened crate.

It was just the sort of place that somebody might visit at any moment. In any case, Anthony supposed, his captor would be returning shortly to deal with the matter of his intrusion; and trying to forget the fact that he had eaten nothing since lunch the day before he sat down again to wait still longer.

A hooter sounded, and the noise of hundreds of people leaving the factory, followed by a similar rush inwards, made Anthony guess that they were changing shifts. His wrist-watch had finally given up the struggle when he rolled off the lorry, but later a beam of hot sunshine came through the crack below the roof and he judged from his feelings that he should have breakfasted long ago.

It would be a very unsatisfactory breakfast when he met Muller, Anthony decided; and after another hour he heard footsteps coming straight across the yard towards his prison and started to his feet.

Anthony never knew what instinct made him get into the corner, so that he was hidden from whomever came into the shed. It was purely instinctive, but as the key turned and the newcomer entered Anthony was thankful for the chance thus given him to take the man by surprise. The man was small and weedy and was evidently the lawful owner of the shed, for he went straight across to the overalls hanging on the peg and then tried to jump round with a muffled squeal as Anthony acted.

In one bound Anthony was across the shed. His left arm went round the man's neck, nearly choking him, his right hand went over the fellow's mouth, and pulling him backwards he took a pace across the floor and uncovered his victim's mouth long enough to shut the door with his disengaged hand. Then, panting slightly, Anthony took a spanner from one of the shelves and thrust the end of it into his prisoner's back.

"Don't turn round or I'll shoot," he ordered, and knew from the sudden stiffening of the man's muscles that the trick had worked.

"W-what are you going to do with me?" quavered his prisoner.

"I might shoot you in cold blood," replied Anthony, "but, instead, I'm going to tie you up and ask you a few questions."

The man tried to look round now that his neck was free, but a sudden twinge of the wrenched muscles and a harder pressure of the handle of the spanner into his spine brought his face back to the wall. Anthony bent down and picked up a coil of wire from the floor.

"Say one word that I haven't asked for, and you'll never know what happened to you."

It was a fairly easy task now that the man was thoroughly cowed, and two minutes later he was lying securely trussed on the floor. His arms and ankles were tightly bound with wire, and his eyes goggled up at his assailant out of a white face.

"First of all," Anthony told him cheerfully, "I want you to tell me all about Waffenfabrik 3.

The handyman's fear of Muller fought with his terror of his captor, and he showed a flash of spirit.

"I won't," he answered defiantly.

"You will," retorted Anthony. "The Gestapo is after me and I'm desperate."

He again picked up the spanner. "Either you answer me, or else I first beat you into a jelly and then shoot you. Which is it going to be?"

It was the most colossal bluff, and for a moment it seemed that the trussed figure on the ground was going to call it, and Anthony desperately produced his last argument.

"If you do talk, nobody need ever know."

The spanner, with its long handle and heavy jaws, was a murderous instrument. Anthony toyed with it suggestively, and the man looked away as if he could not stand the sight of it any longer.

"I'll speak," he answered sullenly at last, and with a sigh of relief Anthony sat down on the edge of the crate.

"I suppose Dr. Muller is in command here? If so, where are his quarters?"

"Inside the left-hand door across the square," answered the man. He licked his lips. "The chief has just moved into them from the other wing of the old building. You can't get in, though. There's nearly always someone on the watch."

"There isn't any other entrance?" asked Anthony.

Again his prisoner seemed torn between conflicting fears, and he reached out for the spanner.

"Any other way?"

"Through the drawing offices on the right," answered the man reluctantly. "Go upstairs, and there's a connecting door on each floor. The top one isn't locked, but nobody's allowed to use it."

"Somebody's going to use it to-day," Anthony assured him, and paused for a moment.

"Has anyone else broken in here during the last few days?"

"I believe there's a man prisoner in the administrative offices," answered the handyman. "He got in during the night."

There was no mention of a woman, and Anthony felt the first ray of hope since he had seen Monica a prisoner on the road. Perhaps, after all, she had managed somehow to escape.

"This hurts me more than it hurts you," he said regretfully, and picking a lump from the pile of cotton-waste on the floor he crammed it into the fellow's mouth and tied it securely with a piece of rag. There was a parcel in his breast pocket that crackled as Anthony touched it, and when he pulled it out it proved to contain a piece of doubtful bread and a lump of dry cheese. It was evidently the man's dinner, but Anthony had long ago given up worrying about trifles.

"You'll be able to have a meal as soon as they find you," he told his captive, and, realising how hungry he was, he sat down on the packing case and had breakfast. Then, feeling better, he put on the handy man's overalls and went out of the shed, closing the door behind him.

Anthony locked the door and slipped the key into his pocket. He took one look round and, walking as if he were a worker in Waffenfabrik 3, went across the courtyard towards the drawing offices in the older building.

It was a short walk, but to Anthony the yard seemed to stretch for miles, while all the windows overlooking him gave the impression of being thronged with watchers. A solitary lorry stood in the yard with its driver lolling against the door of the driving cab, and as Anthony passed the man nodded.

"How much longer are they going to keep me here?" he demanded. "I want to load up and get away."

"It's no business of mine," grunted Anthony; and passing another long row of factory windows he came to what was obviously the drawing-office door.

On his left, the administrative building stretched away with a door at the far end into Muller's quarters; and, deciding that the yard was too public for his liking, Anthony turned into the office. He went along a passage with a glass partition on one side through which he could see rows of typists and beyond them men working on sheets of blue prints, and came to a staircase at the far end.

"Pity they haven't got a lift," said Anthony, more to cheer himself up than anything, and took the first flight at a much soberer pace than he would have wished. It was lucky he took the precaution, for he passed two white-overalled girls coming down who looked at him with curiosity.

"Something gone wrong with the lights," explained Anthony, waving the spanner he was still carrying; and mounting the second flight more quickly he came into a corridor that ended in a fireproof door. It must be the door his captive had mentioned, and Anthony was thankful to find that he had been speaking the truth when he had said that it would not be locked. Muller, he supposed, would not want to advertise the fact that he had anything to hide, especially as his stringent regulations would be enough to keep away enquirers without the use of bolts; and pushing open the door Anthony went through it into a similar passage that ran straight ahead of him and evidently continued for the whole length of the administrative building.

He had no plan of campaign except to get in touch if possible with Monica and Butler, and he went on towards the head of a staircase that showed in the distance on the left of the long passage. Most of the doors had glass panels let into them so he could see the rooms were empty, and he kept on steadily until he reached the stairs. It was there that he met with his first check.

It was possible either to continue along the passage and see if anything was to be found there, or to go down the staircase and try the lower floor. But from below came the sound of men working. One man was whistling softly as he sawed a plank, another was hammering; and, remembering that the handyman had told him there were new arrangements in the administrative building, Anthony guessed that he was standing just above the scene of alterations.

He paused irresolute. Presumably the workmen would stop for lunch some time, and he would have a chance to get down unobserved. On the other hand, he might go now and trust to luck, and he was still considering the matter when he heard footsteps coming up the stairs from the ground floor.

The sawing had stopped for a moment, and in the silence Anthony listened breathlessly. There was a change of sound as the climber reached the landing and was walking on the level, only to be succeeded once more by the sound of mounting footsteps. Anthony crouched behind the low cement wall guarding the top of the staircase and peered over.

The man was wearing Brownshirt uniform, and was breathing heavily as if he did not like the climb. His gaze was directed at his feet, but Anthony could see enough to recognise him. He was Friedrich, the man who had been left to guard him in Muller's house at Southampton, and in a moment he would be on the top landing and would give the alarm.

There was only one thing to do, and Anthony did it. There was a door on his left without a glass panel and with the key on the outside of the lock, and, with hazy memories of rescuing Monica in Nuremberg, Anthony wondered whether he would find one of his friends inside. There was no time to weigh the chances, however. Swiftly but silently he turned the key, opened the door a crack and went through it, and shut the door quietly behind him. He was conscious of somebody who was neither Monica nor Butler rising from his seat on a bed in the far corner, and then, crouching behind the panels, Anthony waited to hear whether Friedrich was coming to this room or if he was going elsewhere.

The footsteps came steadily onwards. They seemed to pause for a moment at the door, and then Anthony told himself that it was only imagination, for they moved off, went along the passage, and passed through the fireproof door into the other part of the building.

" I hope he won't come back this way," breathed Anthony; and turning round he found that the occupant of the room was standing up and looking at him.

He saw a shambling figure in a peasant's clothes. A man with a wide sweep of shoulder and arms like an anthropoid ape, who blinked at him as if the August sunshine was trying to his eyes.

" Have you brought my breakfast? " he asked eagerly, and his speech was so full of gutturals that Anthony could scarcely understand what he said.

" I'm sorry," answered Anthony, " I haven't. I just looked in while passing, and now I'll go away."

He put out his hand towards the door, but the peasant's long arm swept past him and grasped the handle first.

" What do you want, then ? " he demanded.

" I want to go outside," answered Anthony again.

The great figure towered over him. " Call me Your Majesty ! " roared the man suddenly, and, looking up, Anthony realised a thing that made him catch his breath.

The huge body was crowned by a head as small as that of a boy of twelve. The forehead sloped away and was so disfigured by a scar that there seemed hardly room for any brain, and the deep-set eyes that had at first shown greedy curiosity were now blazing in dull rage.

" Call me Your Majesty ! " the giant roared again.

Anthony instinctively tightened his muscles. " Your Majesty," he said obediently; and, as the man before him forgot his fury as quickly as it had risen and turned away with a vacant chuckle, he remembered what Monica had told them in the frowsy sitting-room at Frau Dittmer's.

Here, perhaps, was one of the clues that would help him to solve the mystery, and Anthony came farther into the room.

" I've come here to talk to you, sire. You'll get your breakfast soon," he said respectfully. And there, in that little room in the heart of Waffenfabrik 3, he sat down to a weirder conversation than he had imagined in any of the novels he had ever written.

CHAPTER TWELVE

" HAVE you been here long, Your Majesty? "

The query was put in as casual a tone as Anthony could manage, but the man opposite him did not answer it. He looked at his questioner with a crafty gleam in his small, red-rimmed eyes.

" Why do you ask? " he demanded gutturally.

There was something in his expression that made Anthony lose all fear, as he realised that the figure looming there was one more for pity than for anything else. He had the look of a dog who backs, snarling, not because he is vicious but because of past ill-treatment. The man was undoubtedly mad, but he might be able to give information, and Anthony smiled at him reassuringly.

" I've come to help you, Your Majesty."

" You're one of the men who work here? " asked the peasant.

" I'm ready to take your orders," answered Anthony. He paused for a moment. " Is there anything I can do? "

The man before him had sat down on the frowsy bed, his hands on his knees, his dreadful, low-browed head sunk between massive shoulders. Almost, he seemed lost in dreams, and he brushed the offer away as if Anthony had been an irritating fly.

" I go my way alone," he announced at last.

He rose to his feet, and his eyes looked through Anthony as if they saw great visions beyond his prison walls.

" I am the King of Poland, and to-night I start to free my country! "

It was so unexpected that for a moment Anthony could not say a word. He had been prepared for almost anything, but on the instant the figure before him had straightened and there had come a gleam into those eyes that seemed to show that here was no village idiot but a man with whom to reckon. There was a force in his delusion that carried him away, and Anthony involuntarily found himself thinking of the vagaries of descent, and wondering whether, in this last stunted form, some ancient tree was coming to its end. Could there be some lost, dim memory of greatness in that twisted brain? The thought seemed incredible, and yet . . .

Not incongruously, Anthony remembered that someone had once told him that the proud line of Plantagenet had died out at the end of the last century in the person of an old woman who found a pauper's burial from the workhouse where she died. For an instant the man who had been sitting on the bed towered regally above him, and then the illusion died away. He sat down again, and Anthony was back with a man whose speech was almost unintelligible and in whose brain the light of reason burned very dim.

" They—they laughed at me. Laughed and threw stones," the man said, and looked at Anthony pleadingly.

" You've really come to help me? "

" I'll never laugh at you, Your Majesty," said Anthony gently; and there, in the little room in the secret factory where at any moment he might be discovered by Muller or his servants, he again set himself to unearth the secrets hidden in that stunted brain.

It was like some dream of Bedlam. Instinct told Anthony that he must not speak, and the man on the bed began to talk to himself in a soft, crooning voice.

" Flames. Flames. Flames. I burned a haystack once, and after the flames had died they took me off to gaol. But now I do it for Poland. Flames to burn all the Germans. They tell me it's all ready. They've brought in straw and wood, and covered them with paraffin. A fire for Germans to scorch in, and I shall light it! The Germans ground down my people and tried to make them forget that they were Poles, but I shall show them. . . ."

The muttering died away, and the man looked up at Anthony with question in his eyes.

" You must be a friend of Herr Muller's. Have you come to bring me food ? "

They were back where they had started. There had been a tantalising glimpse of something. Something that might have explained why the man had been kept prisoner in the house in Nuremberg and why he was brought here; but how such a man could light any fire that would interest Muller was more than Anthony could say. He took a breath and tried to drive his words into the other's brain by sheer force of will.

" I'm your friend," repeated Anthony. " I've come to help you with your fire, Your Majesty, and I want to know where you're going to light it."

" It's my fire," answered the man childishly. " You mustn't interfere."

He came across and peered into Anthony's face. " I like you, and you don't laugh at me. Perhaps I'll let you help a little after all. I don't know where it is, though. Herr Muller is going to tell me later, and I shall have to ask him whether you are a friend."

" When is it going to be ? " pressed Anthony.

" I'll ask the man who brings my food," replied the other, and listened for a moment.

" He ought to be coming now."

Anthony looked out of the window. It was nearly noon, and very likely the meal would be arriving soon, but he had more to do before he left. If only he could find out what it all meant, he might be able to escape from Waffenfabrik 3 and tell a tale that would force the authorities to take action against Muller.

"They've kept me with them for a long time," went on the madman, "and two of them always come together when they bring my food. They know I'm a king, and they've been frightened of me ever since I got angry with them; but there's one of them, with eyes like cold, grey stones, that I'm frightened of myself. They call him Herr Muller, and if you're a friend of his you can ask him questions without worrying me."

"I'm not a friend of Dr. Muller's," answered Anthony. "I'd rather talk to you instead."

He had thought out a plan of action. Whatever this fire was, it was evidently vitally important, or Muller would never have hinted as much to Monica in Nuremberg, and would certainly never have troubled to take this man about with him as he had done. The man, too, was evidently a willing tool at the moment, but if Anthony could instil a spark of doubt into him it might make all the difference to Muller's schemes.

"Whatever you do, you mustn't say I've been here," said Anthony impressively. "I might get into trouble, for I've come here to help you, and the others who are frightened would like to stop me if they could."

Watching the man sitting there, his mind wrapped in a fog or lost in his mad dreams, the idea of using him as a confederate seemed absolutely hopeless. There was, however, a chance that he was listening, and Anthony repeated the instructions slowly and clearly.

" You mustn't say I've been here, Your Majesty. I want to help both you and Poland."

" Poland needs all her friends," agreed the madman.

" The man with the cold grey eyes pretends to be helping you," went on Anthony, " but he's doing it for his own ends. He's one of the Germans you hate, and you must not do anything he says."

" He—he makes me frightened," answered his hearer simply.

Once again his eyes were those of a beaten dog, but suddenly the exaltation returned to him as he had a fresh idea.

" Besides, he means to be kind to me. There is the queen."

" The queen ? " echoed Anthony.

" She is to belong to me when I have lighted the fire," explained the madman, and jumping to his feet his voice suddenly rose to a hoarse shout.

" Mine, mine, mine! And the girls have always laughed at me! How dare you say that I don't know what is happening ? I believe you're a German. Get outside! "

The men might arrive at any moment with his food, and the lunatic was making noise enough to attract the attention of anybody within call. Anthony hastily got to his feet.

" I'm your friend, whatever they say, and we shall see each other again," he said in a last attempt to turn the man into an ally, and as he opened the door he saw that the King of Poland had again sunk on to his bed and that the moment's frenzy was past. Anthony went out of the room, turned the key in the lock, so that everything was as he had found it, and realised that apart from a little information of which he could make nothing he was no nearer to finding the solution to the mystery than he had been when he left the shed.

Waffenfabrik 3 still held its secret; and when Anthony thought of its guarded walls, of the hundreds of workers in the crowded machine shops, and the fact that one unguarded step would raise the alarm in an instant, he felt something of the absurdity of one man alone trying to fight against what was bound to come.

Opposite was the head of the staircase leading to the floors below. The corridor with its rows of doors ran left and right, and realising the impossibility of examining every room Anthony turned once more towards the stair. As if history were repeating itself, he heard somebody coming up.

There seemed from the footsteps to be two men, and Anthony guessed they were bringing the prisoner his belated food. It would be necessary, after all, to go into one of the other rooms, and he turned boldly to the next door and grasped the handle. It was not locked, and going inside he found himself in an empty room.

The men with the food did not waste much time, and from that fact Anthony gained a hope that the madman had not mentioned his visit. He heard the men go into the next room, and there was only a minute's murmur of voices before they came out again and once more went downstairs.

" There's too much traffic about for my taste," remarked Anthony, and heartening himself with the thought that they would not be likely to come back just yet he emerged from his hiding place and put a foot cautiously on the stairs.

The sounds of carpentry had ceased and when

Anthony reached the first floor it was apparent that the workmen had gone to dinner. It was a huge, bare room that was evidently being altered to house a clerical staff, and at the far end a short corridor ran between half-constructed private offices. There was not a soul in sight, and, as the hum of machinery from the other buildings still filled the air, it struck Anthony as surprising that he should find this deserted area in the midst of Waffenfabrik 3.

It did not seem natural in a factory that was working to capacity, and it had no relation to the busy scene last night when the lorries were unloading feverishly and hordes of workers filled the yard. It was all part of the mystery of the place, and Anthony could think of no reason for it. Ignoring the new private offices, he tiptoed across the hall towards the other end.

Monica was a prisoner, and had shouted to him that Butler was taken too, and Muller might be keeping them anywhere in this wing. Very likely if Anthony found them he would discover that there was an armed guard there as well, but he could not help the thrill of expectation that went through him when he opened the first of the three doors.

It was a door with a ground-glass panel on which was inscribed the title "GESCHÄFTSFÜHRER," and the room beyond it was empty. It was not, however, unfurnished like the rest of the rooms that Anthony had seen, and remembering the inscription on the door he was struck at once with the thought that this must be Muller's own quarters.

The great mahogany desk, the thick-piled carpet, the scent of cigars that brought back vividly the little room behind the lecture hall at Southampton, the scantily draped marble figure in one corner that held a torch lighter and struck Anthony as being in the worst of taste, all somehow seemed to bear Muller's imprint so that the room cried out its ownership.

Anthony was in the very brain of Waffenfabrik 3. Here was a room that, if it could speak, could tell him all that he wanted to know; and for a moment he stood still wondering how he could find out its secret. The steady beat of the machines came to his ears, but suddenly he heard something else that brought to his mind again the fact that he was in a dangerous situation.

Someone was walking across the hall outside, someone whose heels rang out as he came briskly towards Anthony's hiding place, and, with a sudden conviction that the newcomer was making for this very room, Anthony thought that he was trapped.

But only for a moment. The office, as has been said, was furnished in a very different manner from the rest of the executive wing of Waffenfabrik 3, and there were plenty of hiding places. Immediately opposite Anthony was a fireproof door that was the twin of the one on the floor above and probably led back to the drawing offices, but as he did not want to go that way he turned in desperation towards the windows.

They looked on to the outer wall, and were provided with thick velvet curtains that hung down to the floor. Anthony leaped behind them and found that, even when drawn back as they were at the moment, they provided enough cover for him to hide. He was just able to arrange the folds before the newcomer entered the room.

The man did not trouble to look round. He went straight across to the desk, there was a faint ring from the bell as he lifted the receiver from the telephone, and then a metallic voice spoke into the instrument and Anthony realised that he was listening to Max.

" Can I speak to the Director ? " queried Max. " I'll hold on."

He hummed a little tune while he was waiting, and it seemed to Anthony that the fellow was unusually cheerful. He could hear him beating a tattoo on the desk with his fingers, and then he spoke again.

" I've arranged everything, sir. Shall I wait for you here ? "

There was a pause while he listened to the answer. " In my office in ten minutes ? Very good, sir, I'll go there straight away."

He left the room, and although Anthony strained his ears to the utmost he did not hear any sound of a key turning in the lock outside. Evidently fear of Dr. Muller was enough to keep his office inviolate, and Anthony emerged from behind the curtains and looked round again.

The heavy, roll-top desk was closed, and in a land of central heating there were no pokers with which to force the lock. Besides, any noise might bring Max back at the double, for although he was meeting Muller in another room there was no means of knowing whether it was far away. Anthony decided to leave the office and try elsewhere.

" Anyway, I'm getting plenty of exercise," he murmured to himself, and creeping out of the room he found the hall still empty save for its litter of planks and sawdust, the carpenter's bench and the ladders of the decorators. The two rooms next to Muller's had their doors open and were unfurnished, and he decided to go downstairs.

There was apparently nothing to discover where he was, and his immunity so far had begun to make him careless of the inhabitants of Waffenfabrik 3. They guarded their walls, but, once inside, it seemed that anybody could walk about as he liked.

"After all, I'm in overalls," Anthony reassured himself, and going down the last flight of stairs with less caution than usual he suddenly found himself face to face with a man in black S.S. uniform.

The man looked at Anthony with suspicion. "What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"I was sent up to help the workmen," answered Anthony. He gestured vaguely in the direction of the upper floor. "Herr Max sent me, and——"

"You're the fellow we were looking for in Nuremberg!" broke in his inquisitor, and the next instant Anthony found himself looking into the muzzle of an automatic pistol that pointed straight between his eyes.

There was a ring of conviction in his captor's voice that made argument seem hopeless, but Anthony tried to bluff.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he protested. "What's the game? I'm in a hurry."

The S.S. man leaned forward, pulled the spanner from where Anthony had put it in the pocket of his dungarees, and dropped it to the floor.

"Right about turn—March!" he ordered, and, bitterly regretting the fact that he had thrown the gun he captured from Muller's doorman in Nuremberg down a drain, owing to some vague idea that it would incriminate him if he were captured, Anthony obeyed.

He about turned and marched. They had met in the ground-floor corridor, and keeping the muzzle of his automatic poked into Anthony's back, the S.S. man drove him along it and knocked at a door at the far end.

"Enter," said a voice, and opening the door the guard thrust Anthony inside.

They came into an office that was not so richly furnished as the one Anthony had just left. At the far end was a desk at which Max was seated writing, and standing with his back to them looking out of the window was Muller. The latter swung round as they came in.

" Herr Gott, another of them ? " he asked in amazed tones, then smiled and took a pace forward.

" Mr. Wayne, it is most kind of you to call like this. I hope we shall be able to continue the conversation you so abruptly cut short at Southampton. Until I can find the time, I can at any rate assure you that you will be among your friends."

The last words sent a chill down Anthony's spine. " What do you mean ? " he demanded.

" You will find out shortly," answered Muller, and turned to the guard.

" Frenzel, I congratulate you. Where did you find this man ? "

The S.S. man saluted. It was evident that Dr. Muller was an even greater power inside Waffenfabrik 3 than he was outside. And Butler and Anthony had noticed that, even if he did not see eye to eye with the authorities in all things, his influence in Nuremberg and elsewhere was not to be despised.

" On the staircase, sir," reported the guard. " He was just coming down from the floor where they are making alterations, and as it is the workmen's dinner hour there was nobody upstairs."

A shadow crossed Muller's face and was wiped away. His magnificent aplomb was scarcely shaken.

" I was on the point of asking you how long you have been here, Mr. Wayne, and what you have seen," he remarked lightly. " On thinking it over, however, I find it does not matter."

Anthony tried to be equally unmoved. " It may matter a lot," he pointed out. " There are authorities outside this factory who would be interested to hear what you are doing."

He tried a shot in the dark. It would, perhaps, be better not to mention his talk with the madman, but the rest could do no harm. And why was this wing kept so very much apart from the rest of Waffenfabrik 3?

" For example, they might wish to enquire why you are making alterations in the factory."

" If they hope to obtain the answer from you, they will need to get in touch with the next world," replied Muller pleasantly; and, as if postponing the rest of an amusing conversation to another time, he turned to the S.S. man.

" Put him with the prisoner we took last night."

Again the man saluted, and even in that moment Anthony noticed that there was no Heil Hitler or raising of the arm such as he would have seen anywhere else in Germany.

" Jawohl, Herr Geschäftsführer," the man answered briskly, and as he again jabbed his automatic into his captive's back Anthony turned round and went out of the room.

They had not, Anthony discovered, far to go. They went back along the corridor, swung into a small cul-de-sac half way along it, and found themselves facing a locked door.

" Inside here," commanded the guard, unlocking and opening the door, and Anthony found himself in a room that was furnished only with a few chairs. There was a door in the far corner that was evidently locked, and a barred window looked out on to the wall of Waffenfabrik 3. The solitary occupant of the room rose as they came in.

" Please knock before entering," remarked the prisoner pleasantly, and then, seeing who the entrants were, paused for a moment.

"So they've got you too, have they?"

The S.S. man pushed Anthony forward. "Another bird for the cage," he grinned. "The Chief will soon be starting an aviary."

"At any rate, neither he nor Max will qualify as birds of paradise," retorted Butler, and the next moment the door slammed behind the guard.

The key turned in the lock, and Anthony and Butler were alone.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Butler had greeted the S.S. man as if he had not a care in the world, but the face he now turned to Anthony told a very different story.

"So they've caught you too, have they, laddie?" he repeated. "Take your choice of the two free chairs."

It was obvious that being cooped up in one room while the vital hours ticked away was no pleasant occupation. He followed Anthony's eyes to the window, and shook his head.

"The windows are barred, the far door is locked and would stand up against a charging elephant, and every half-hour or so Max has poked his smiling face in to make sure I'm still here. We've about as much chance of escaping as we ever really had of saving Europe while Muller held all the aces and we didn't even know the game."

He paused. "A grim pastime, laddie, trying to piece things together and finding there's nothing to piece. The only consolation I've had was the thought that you and Miss Hayward weren't caught as well. What have you been doing with yourselves, and is she still outside?"

"But—but I was afraid Monica was a prisoner too," said Anthony. He looked at Butler, and in spite of the gravity of the situation felt a sudden rising hope.

"Do you mean she hasn't been caught? We went to the Goldener Adler, and I left her there alone while I took the car out to fetch you. You didn't turn up, and when I was going back to Molsbach I saw a car at the side of the road and Monica was in the hands of a lot of men."

The horror of that moment when he had driven past her came over Anthony again, but he went on doggedly. It was no use now, of course, but he had found out a little and he must report everything to Butler, who might be able to make more out of it than he could himself.

"She managed to shout to me that she was caught, and that I was to leave her alone. She said you were a prisoner, too; and now you tell me that she isn't here."

"Comrade Muller hasn't shared the secret with me if she is," answered Butler lightly, and getting up he came across and put a hand on Anthony's shoulder.

"A glass of beer would help us to think better, but our host doesn't see eye to eye with me on the subject of hospitality. I know it's hard, laddie, when things go wrong and you can't do anything about it. If I hadn't brought you into this you would certainly have been hanged as a murderer, and if you ever get away you may be still, but I shall never forgive myself for letting Miss Hayward get mixed up with Muller and Comrade Max. While we aren't certain she's caught, however, we can still hope she's safe. Your passing may have scared them and she may have got away."

"It's queer Muller never mentioned to you that she was caught," said Anthony hopefully.

"Even queerer than Max's face," agreed Butler.

He paused. "We'd better pool our experiences. Personally, laddie, I haven't had any. They were expecting my visit, and planted a snake in German N.C.O.'s uniform in my path to tell me how easy it would be to get in here and that I simply couldn't fail; and when after incredible efforts I arrived inside they took me into custody and I've been here ever since. I don't know where you found your own admission ticket, but I hope you've had more time to look round than they gave me."

"I looked round all right," answered Anthony moodily. "The trouble is that nothing I saw makes any sense."

"Tell it to the man with brains," encouraged Butler, and although escape seemed hopeless Anthony told all that might have been useful if only they could get away . . . that might have explained strange movements in Europe that were already puzzling the intelligence services of half a dozen nations, that might have turned the course of war into the way for which Britain was preparing instead of leaving it to burst its banks at an unexpected point.

There was the whole story from their arrival at the Goldener Adler until the moment when Anthony saw Monica struggling in the road and swung into the side lane, to miss death by inches at the chalk-pit edge. Anthony told of the convoy of lorries entering Waffenfabrik 3, and was cursed by Butler for not looking at their contents; he described his encounter with the foreman who mysteriously failed to return, and his intimidation of the handyman that morning, but it was not until he got to his movements in the executive building that he sensed a keener interest on Butler's part. He tried to remember everything that had happened, down to the smallest detail.

"You say this man upstairs called himself the King of Poland?" asked Butler. "And with Muller's aid he intends to light such a fire in Germany as shall not be put out in our time? If I didn't know this factory was teetotal, I should have said you were imagining the whole thing."

"He was obviously the man Monica saw in Nuremberg," pointed out Anthony, "and he must have a big part to play, or Muller wouldn't drag him round like this."

"He doesn't exactly sound a household pet," agreed Butler, and jumping from his chair he paced impatiently to the barred window and back.

"I believe if we knew all that he stands for we should have the answer to the whole thing. Not that it really matters now, but I hate dying before I've seen the last instalment."

He banged his clenched fist against the wall. "You did very well to leave him thinking you were a friend, but if only you could have made him talk! The whole place shouts aloud that something big is going to happen, and it's dated for to-night. I hope to God that Muller hasn't taken Miss Hayward prisoner, but, if he has, why is he keeping her apart? Even if this wing is nearly empty, he can't want to turn every other room into a prison cell."

"The offices are in the right wing of this block, but on this side of the fireproof doors it's very different," remarked Anthony. "The top floor's deserted, the first floor is being altered and is unoccupied except for the room where I saw Max, and now they've locked us up here. If this place is as busy as you say, why isn't space too valuable for them to waste like this?"

"It certainly doesn't seem up to friend Muller's usual standard of efficiency," agreed Butler. "You say Max was in the office upstairs, that it's fully furnished with a desk and everything else, and that he talked to Muller from it? It's evidently Muller's own room and they're up to something dirty that they want to keep dark. From everything that's happened, you can bet that the authorities would like to know as much about it as we should ourselves."

"And we can't tell them!" cried Anthony bitterly.

"If what I think is correct, Muller has a big following, but it pays him at the moment to be above suspicion in his own factory," continued Butler. "Let's sit and think of food, or ask each other riddles to which we know the answers. Better still, you might see if you can disprove my theory that there's no way of escape from this room."

"I'll try," agreed Anthony doubtfully, but the careful scrutiny he gave to the doors and windows merely proved that Butler's statement had been correct. He came back to his seat.

"How about waiting till the guard comes in with some food, and then scragging him?" he suggested.

"The chauffeur brought me a crust or so for breakfast, and he was accompanied by Max and another thug with drawn pistols," replied Butler. "If they repeat the performance with the same cast we shan't stand a chance."

"Perhaps they'll get careless," suggested Anthony hopefully, and sitting down again he waited to see what would happen next.

The ray of sunlight that crept over the outer wall into their prison moved slowly across the floor. A hooter sounded from the gate and was followed by a distant bustle of feet, as if a meal were over or they were changing shifts, and when at last footsteps sounded outside and the door opened Anthony realised that his plan had been hopeless from the start.

The door was flung wide. Through it came Muller, followed by Max who carried an automatic in his hand, and he ordered his prisoners to the far side of the room.

"You will kindly," instructed Muller in a cold voice, "move your chairs over to the window, so that I may be able to talk to you without the necessity of having to watch for any misguided movements on your part."

He waited until his command was carried out and then spoke again.

"I must apologise for my discourtesy in not having called on you earlier, but I hope that the delay will merely increase your pleasure at my visit."

Butler had been sitting in his chair with his head between his hands, but at the first sound in the corridor he had leaped to his feet. Now he sat down again and nodded cheerfully.

"You're quite right," he agreed. "Mr. Wayne and I have arrived at the stage when it is even a pleasure to see you."

He spoke the truth. The wooden chairs of their prison were uncomfortably hard, they had discussed Anthony's discoveries until they could do so no longer, and anything was better than brooding on their position and thinking how different it might have been. Muller, his spectacles discarded so that his cold eyes were revealed, took the only vacant chair and nodded to Max to stand by the closed door.

"I regret the discomfort to which you have been put, but if you had given me longer notice of your coming I would have seen that a bed was prepared."

"I doubt whether you would have aired the sheets properly," answered Butler.

Anthony was silent. Their captor had a quiet air of enjoyment, as if he were a cat and they were the mice with whom he was playing before the game was ended at one blow, and it made him feel uncomfortable. Butler, however, refused to abide by the rules of the game. He smiled serenely at Muller.

"I should have hated bedclothes that had already been used by the unlovely Max."

"You'll change your tune before we've finished with you," growled Max from the doorway.

"I am a little late in calling on you because we have other claims on our hospitality," explained Muller unmoved. "I paused to have a chat with Miss Hayward before I came on here."

His blow had gone home. "She—she can't be here!" cried Anthony; and for a second even Butler was silenced.

"Is Miss Hayward all right?" asked Anthony hoarsely.

"Miss Hayward was caught by our friend Max, and though she managed to escape again she was once more captured after a short chase," answered Muller. "She has been good enough to spend the night here, and when I left her half an hour ago she was in the best of health."

"There are more of us outside. You'd better leave her alone," threatened Butler, and with a wave of the hand Muller dismissed the subject and pulled out his cigar case.

"We will discuss her future later. You don't mind if I smoke? In any case, I fear you can hardly prevent me."

He flicked the spent match into a corner and blew out a rich cloud of smoke. "This is going to be my lucky day, and after the trouble you have given me I feel that I owe myself a little relaxation."

To Anthony, watching him closely, there seemed to be a veiled exaltation in the man that breathed the consciousness that at last his plans were matured, and it did more to show the hopelessness of their situation than anything else had done so far.

"Why have you come here?" he asked shortly.

"I have called this meeting," answered Muller precisely, "so that I may define the various ways in which you can both be of use to me to-night."

He coughed, and Anthony was reminded incongruously of the benignant Dr. Muller of Amsterdam who had presided over so many respectable committees of the Friends of Peace. Butler, evidently, had the same idea, for he grinned.

"You make me think of a directors' meeting," he announced. "Can you let me have a piece of blotting paper and a pencil, so that I can draw funny faces when I'm bored?"

"I suppose you realise that our friends in England will be wanting to know where we are if you don't let us go within twenty-four hours?" demanded Anthony.

"If, as I very much doubt, you have passed on any news of your doings to England, the knowledge will be useless to them," retorted Muller, "and I do not think our proceedings this afternoon will be attended by boredom."

He leaned forward suddenly, and the latent triumph gleamed in his eyes. "Nothing matters now, my friends, for within a week Europe will be at war!"

War! The word echoed round the little room, and Anthony drew a quick breath.

"I don't call that news," replied Butler carelessly. "We've been expecting it for months." He paused. "Have you picked sides yet, or are you leaving that till the war begins?"

"It is, at any rate, arranged that Germany will win," affirmed Muller.

" And how do you propose to ensure that ? " asked Anthony.

He had begun to see Butler's game, and realised that they must keep their captor talking. Muller was in an unwontedly expansive mood, and seemed to have come here to amuse himself at their expense. He no doubt felt that he was talking to two men who could do nothing to hinder his schemes, and although every logical instinct told Anthony that he was right he backed up Butler's efforts. The urge to know was upon them both, and, if by some miracle their position changed, the facts that they learned now might be of inestimable value to the world.

Deliberately, Butler flicked Muller on the raw. " I suppose you have the whole of Germany behind you ? " he enquired. " If so, they will at least know that you can't pick their hip pockets. And do you still want the Polish Corridor, or is that out of date by now ? "

" All Germany will be behind us as soon as our plans are known," snarled Muller, and with that strange exaltation again uppermost he stubbed out his cigar on the arm of his chair and began to speak.

He began to tell them what Stephen Hayward had guessed at in Nuremberg. To tell them what it was they sought, and what were the unseen forces that were pulling so many strings in Europe. And as he spoke his listeners' hearts sank lower, for he seemed very sure of what he said.

The cat was uppermost in Muller now. The cat that, having a little leisure, wishes to enjoy the terrors of its victims who must shortly die. As he talked he rose from his chair and paced about the room, apparently forgetful of his audience. Again he would look at them narrowly, or pause to answer a question. Only Max, watchful by the door, remained unmoving with his automatic ready in his hand.

"Germany has suffered too long," said Muller; and his voice was that of a fanatic. "The Führer has done something to correct the Treaty of Versailles, but he is mentally unbalanced and now, in von Ribbentrop, has found a bad adviser. He has been led to believe that everything can be won by his wits, without a struggle; but we others know that war is inevitable and that with Britain rearming it is necessary to get our blow in first. Some of us—a larger number than you think—have made a scheme by which his plans can be improved, and the reins of real authority will pass into other hands."

He paused and bowed, a figure of monumental arrogance. Hitler might be allowed to remain in nominal control, but it was obvious that Herr Doktor Muller, recently Continental Organiser of the Friends of Peace, and Director of the great Waffenfabrik 3, would be the power behind the throne.

He continued. "We others realise that the day for diplomacy is over. Left to himself, Hitler will invade Poland; and when Britain declares war he will hold his hand on the Western front and hope to arrange a peace that will give him time to breathe before he makes another move. . . . And we are convinced that Britain will not consent to peace. She will have time to prepare for war and tighten her blockade, the German army and people will be disheartened by an inactivity they do not understand, and Hitler and von Ribbentrop will be caught like rats in a trap they cannot break.

"The only hope for Germany is to attack France and England first, and then pick Poland like a ripe fruit after the democracies have been beaten to the ground.

"You have heard of the burning of the Reichstag? A communist named van der Lubbe was blamed for it—a Dutchman; and although he was innocent it formed the Nazi party's stepping-stone to power. In this building we have a second van der Lubbe; and in the burning of Waffenfabrik 3 we shall have the sign that it is time for us to take over the German Reich."

There was a moment's silence. Anthony's thoughts flew to the midnight conversation with Butler in the hotel at Southampton after they had escaped from Muller's house, and he remembered something that had been said then. "Hitler is like a circus elephant," Butler had told him. "He's walking across the arena on upturned bottles, and at every stage of his progress he makes absolutely certain that the next step is safe. One day he'll balance a bit too long, though, and there are some in Germany who hold it would be more effective if he were to smash the bottles before that day comes and stalk through the broken pieces to his goal. Just how soon he is forced to do it, and how he decides to smash them, may make all the difference between our winning and losing the coming war."

It had stuck in Anthony's memory, and now they were in the presence of the man who held these views. The childishness of the first signal for revolution made Anthony gasp. The Reichstag had been burned down, as Muller said, and what had succeeded once might do so again, but surely with a madman like the one upstairs . . .

Butler was determined not to give away how much they already knew. "I suppose your van der Lubbe is the man Miss Hayward saw in Nuremberg," he said lightly. "May I ask who he really is?"

Muller shrugged his shoulders. "A madman. A fool who thinks himself King of Poland, and who comes from a village near Posen, the town that the Poles call Poznan. Does it really matter? He will serve his turn."

"And do you actually believe that burning down one factory will make all this difference to Germany?" demanded Anthony.

"There are men near Hitler who will see it makes the difference," explained Muller. "It will give us a new grievance against the Poles, and we shall have an excuse to close our frontiers and prepare our attack on France and England unobserved. The world will think we mean to move against Warsaw, but we shall advance into France faster than we did in 1914, and this time we shall not be held up at the gates of Paris."

The man's words seemed mad, but there was a fire of conviction in them that sent a shudder down Anthony's spine. To his surprise, Butler merely nodded with polite interest.

"Have you carried your plans any farther than burning down your own factory?" he asked. "It doesn't sound nearly enough to me."

"What about Russia?" added Anthony. "We are negotiating in Moscow to-day, and you will have to deal with her as well."

Muller stopped his pacing and looked at his last questioner with a tolerant smile. "Do you really believe that Russia will help you?" he asked. "She will be on our side. She will be tempted with a share of Poland and the possibility of pickings in the Baltic, and that is one reason why we must get rid of that incompetent schemer von Ribbentrop and take control of the neurotic dreamer Hitler before the war can start. We can then ensure that, if Russia is our ally, it will not be in the way that suits her best but on our own terms."

Butler had been keeping an eye on Max while Muller was speaking. He half moved as he thought he saw an opening, the muzzle of the automatic rose threateningly, and he settled back again. A small thing, but enough to break the thread of Muller's reasoning and make it necessary to use new tactics to make him speak again. There must be a bigger move to follow the fire, or else the scheme was so hare-brained that it was hopeless. On the other hand Muller believed it was sure to succeed; and with only half the story they were nearly as much in the dark as ever.

Max lowered his automatic again, but it was obviously impossible to take him by surprise. Butler looked at Muller, and when he spoke it was in a tone of unwilling admiration.

"If I'd known as much at first as I know now, I don't think I'd have interfered," he said slowly, and Anthony gasped. "It's too big for me to tackle."

"You are beginning to realise that the end of you and those like you is at hand?" sneered Muller.

The monstrous vanity of the man showed again, and Anthony realised what Butler was doing. The secret service man spoke further.

"I'd like to have died knowing the rest," he continued pensively. "I suppose you really know what you mean to do?"

"Is it wise to say anything more, Herr Doktor?" asked Max from the doorway; and, if Muller had intended not to tell them any more, the interruption made him change his mind. He was not taking instructions from his followers, but all the same there was a note of caution when he spoke.

" As I have said, your hopes of a pact with Russia are doomed to failure. The Führer's advisers have already agreed with her to partition Poland, but they have no guarantee that she will help them in any war that may arise later. When we assume control of the Reich, we shall see that Russia is implicated so deeply that she must be our ally to the end.

" In von Ribbentrop's plan, we shall waste our forces conquering Poland, and Russia will march in without trouble as soon as the Polish army is broken. Stalin has the mentality of a peasant, and while we offer him gifts he is suspicious. If, on the other hand, we make him believe that we do not wish to share Poland with him, the position will be reversed.

" He will dash in first to get his share of the spoils, and will be branded as the aggressor. We shall leave him to do the fighting, and occupy Western Poland with a few army corps as soon as he has done our work. And that means our troops will be free to operate against France and England, and that within three days we shall have bases for air raids against Britain in our hands. Our next move is one that will infallibly bind Soviet Russia as our ally, and we can take back what we have given to her as soon as she has served our turn."

" What is your next move ? " asked Butler.

A note of eagerness had crept into his voice, and Muller noticed it. The director of Waffenfabrik 3 sat down again, and took another cigar from his case. He lighted it and was once more the suave man of the world.

"But I am afraid, my dear Captain Butler and Mr. Wayne, that we are wasting time. Suffice it to say that our next move will be unexpected and completely effective. I came here to discuss how you might both be of use to me in our fire to-night, and to tell you that Miss Hayward's rôle has already been fixed."

Anthony licked his lips. "What are you going to do with her?" he demanded.

"We will deal first with present company," suggested Muller; and as he crossed his knees and leaned back comfortably it was obvious that this was what he had really come to say. The gleam of enjoyment in his eyes was brighter than ever.

"First we have our King of Poland who will set fire to this factory. You, Captain Butler, did me a service when you broke through our defences yesterday. What has been done once, the authorities will say, can be done again. You have proved the possibility of my van der Lubbe having got into the factory unobserved, and the difficulty of explaining his arrival has vanished straight away."

"Do you give me a ripe, juicy coconut, or do I get a better cigar than the one you're smoking?" asked Butler flippantly.

"You are also," continued Muller unheeding, "a member of the British Secret Service. You will, I think, be shot this evening while attempting to escape. It will be clear that, as well as belonging to a Polish patriotic society, the incendiary was receiving help from England; and this will make Germany's case against the democracies even stronger. To Mr. Wayne I have assigned a simpler rôle."

He turned to Anthony with an exaggerated air of courtesy. "The circumstances of our fire are somewhat exceptional, and as I hate waste I have arranged that there shall be the maximum of excitement combined with the minimum of damage. The offices of Waffenfabrik 3 are situated in the building that was once a celluloid factory, until it was taken over by the Reich. I understand that certain dangerous processes were involved, and until recently this wing was used for a special reason for chemical experiments."

Muller paused. " Being of an economical temperament, and workmen and scientists being cheaper than building material, my predecessors did not trouble to strengthen the laboratory wing, but merely put a fireproof and explosion-proof wall between it and the offices. Now that I have emptied the wing to convert it into more offices, and have removed the laboratories to a building near the gates, there will be nothing easier than to make a localised fire behind our fireproof wall. One thing only is still wanting, and that is for one or two good German workers to lose their lives in the conflagration. You, my friend, will be a worker who has been burned to death."

The calm detachment with which he spoke was belied by the hidden enjoyment in his eyes, and Anthony tried to keep as calm as Butler. " It seems quite a good idea," he agreed, then paused. " You will set Miss Hayward free ? "

Muller rose to his feet, and it was apparent that this was the moment of sheer enjoyment that he had been keeping to the last.

" You have given me trouble in the past, my friend," he answered, " and that is a pleasure you must pay for. You are interested in Miss Hayward's future ? I am afraid she has none; for we have girl workers in this factory, and the unidentified body of one of them will be found in the ruins after the fire."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

It was all over. For a moment everything had gone black in front of Anthony's eyes. He had heard a voice he did not recognise as his own shouting " You swine! " and as he leaped at Muller the Director of Waffenfabrik 3 had stepped aside and Max had reversed his automatic and brought the butt crashing down on Anthony's unprotected head. Fortunately the blow was a glancing one, but it was enough. As he fell he caught a glimpse of Butler springing forward to be met by a threatening muzzle, and then all had grown dim; and when Anthony came round the room was full of men.

Max was still by the doorway, the S.S. man and the chauffeur had just finished tying Butler to one of the chairs, and now they lifted Anthony like a sack and pushed him into his former seat.

" Tie them both up and leave them," came Muller's voice as calmly as if nothing at all had happened. Rope was knotted round Anthony so that his arms were fast behind him and his ankles tied to the legs of the chair, and then the men left them and they were again alone.

" We will meet again just before the fire," said Muller pleasantly as he departed. " We have two convoys of lorries due to-night. One leaves again at nine thirty, and the other should arrive soon after eleven. Shall we say ten o'clock, so that our work is undisturbed? "

" Bring me a glass of beer if you come before closing time," answered Butler, and as soon as the door had closed he turned to Anthony with an anxious look.

" Are you all right ? "

Anthony's head was throbbing, and his throat felt dry and parched. His heart was filled with blackest misery, but as he moved his neck cautiously he was surprised to find that he was better than he had thought.

" I'm all right, thanks," he answered, and realised that he was to blame for their being tied up.

" I'm sorry I was such a fool."

" The attempt had my sympathy, laddie. It's lucky your dome is solid ivory, or Max might have hurt you," replied Butler, and then his tone changed.

" Have you thought that Muller came here to amuse himself and not us ? That what he said about Miss Hayward may not be true after all ? "

It was bravely said, but Anthony was not deceived. Butler was trying to comfort him with an argument that he did not believe himself, and he shook his head.

" I wish I could think so," he groaned.

" We've got to think so, or we'll go mad," pointed out Butler. " We ought never to have dragged Miss Hayward into this, but that's not the point. I still say Muller's bluffing, and, if she's a prisoner as he says she is, he means to keep her for a time and then let her go. Anyway, they won't do anything to her until just before the fire, and we don't know what will happen before then."

Anthony's head was aching dully, and he found it difficult to take a cheerful view. " Anyway, things won't change for the better," he said gloomily, and made an effort to pull himself together.

" You couldn't help Monica coming. It's my fault for letting her help me when she first came to my cottage, and after that she had the courage that wouldn't let us keep her out. For God's sake, let's try to believe that you were right just now."

He changed the subject. " What I can't understand is why Max didn't kill us both when he had the chance. He only knocked me out, and I saw you trying to get him just as I went down."

" Post-mortem, laddie," explained Butler. " To look at it cheerfully, they don't want any coroners to find that we died several hours before the fire. That's why we're safe until ten o'clock. Muller doesn't miss any moves in a game like this."

" Do you believe there's anything in his game ? " asked Anthony.

Butler nodded. " It looks like the thirteenth move we were afraid of; and even if they don't succeed in bluffing Stalin, an attack straight away on the Western front would take us unprepared. Personally, I think Stalin will fall for a share of Poland. And think what it will all mean. There are the beginnings now of half a dozen splits in Germany, and if Hitler tries to win by diplomacy he will give them time to get far worse. His best hope is an immediate attack, for even if it doesn't succeed it would unite the Germans and add another three years to the war."

Butler paused. " I know we're rearming, but even the finest fighter would be handicapped if his opponent kicked him in the face while he was climbing into the ring. Think of air raids on London before our anti-aircraft batteries are in position, before our A.R.P. services have conjured an organisation out of practically nothing, while vans are still being converted into ambulances and the trains are packed with children being evacuated from the danger areas. Think of our Expeditionary Force trying to get tanks and heavy guns across to France while Germany controls the Channel ports. . . . It might come to that, and yet it seemed a million to one chance that it never would. Hitler still hopes to get Poland without a major war, and we're banking on that belief. He's looked like getting himself into a mess, and now this organisation of Muller's—which is far more powerful than we knew—is going to see that he strikes us first."

His words died away. There didn't seem anything more to say. There didn't seem anything that they could have done.

"What's the time?" asked Anthony at last.

Their hands were tied behind them so that they could not see their watches. Butler tried to move his chair towards Anthony, discovered that, tied as he was, he would only upset it and make things worse than ever, and gave up the attempt.

"I should judge that it's about four o'clock. That gives us another five hours to think out a plan before the future Führer and his pals come back."

"If only Monica were safe!" groaned Anthony, and the minutes passed while everything was forgotten save the thought of what her end would be.

It was impossible to imagine it. Butler was still, save for a slight movement that showed he was trying to undo the rope that tied his wrists; but either the S.S. man or the chauffeur understood knots, and it was impossible for either of them to move more than a finger, much less to free their hands.

Vital seconds ticking away, with Butler and Anthony helpless, and nobody outside the great munitions factory to know of their presence there or even guess at the plot they had found.

The work of Waffenfabrik 3 went on. In the new laboratory to which he had moved protestingly a few days earlier, Dr. Schiedemann bent over a retort while his assistant noted down the details that he dictated. On the far side of the square the machine sheds hummed with a steady throb, the men assembling the parts that had come from other factories or working on parts that needed a precision of a thousandth of an inch.

The new German gun was being turned out in thousands, to be sent to various armouries and later to pump out death on those who dared to resist the ambition of the Reich—the workers thinking as they made it of the scarcity of decent food, of their evening meeting as members of the Nazi party, of their children's activities in the Hitler Youth, or merely worrying over their private lives or dreaming of some girl.

The machines throbbed on. The handyman, a sorely puzzled person, was cleaning one of the staff cars. Herr Doktor Muller's own chauffeur had stumbled on him as he lay bound in the shed, had taken him straight to the Director himself, and after a talk which the handyman had not understood at all but which had left him realising that it would be very dangerous indeed to tell of his adventure, he had been curtly ordered to return to work.

In an upper room, the madman from the Polish village dreamed of a future in which his people freed themselves from foreign threats and he was king. Workmen continued their task of converting the first floor of the old laboratory wing into offices, and in a small room with locked door at the far end of the same floor lay the third prisoner that Muller had taken in the last twenty-four hours.

Monica Hayward had only enjoyed a moment's liberty after she had broken away the night before. Almost as soon as her foot had caught and she had measured her length in the heather a heavy hand had descended on her shoulder and she was again a prisoner. Now, lying on a mattress on the floor, with her feet and hands tied and a gag thrust into her mouth, she was waiting with only a dull wonder as to what would happen next.

It had all seemed like a horrible dream; and save for the moment when she had seen Anthony accelerate and pass Max and the chauffeur, everything was better forgotten than remembered. She had not spoken to Muller, who had merely looked in at the door, but Max had brought a cotton dress and a blue cotton overall which he had ordered her to put on without giving a reason. If she did not do it, he threatened, he would come and dress her himself; and later, after she had obeyed, a man in S.S. uniform had brought her a tray of food. She had then been tied and gagged, and did not even know in what part of the building her prison was.

On the night of her arrival the saloon car had flashed through the gates with Max making her lean back so that she could not be seen, and after a word with someone—she supposed it to be Muller—he had led her through passages in which he had not troubled to switch on the lights and up a staircase to her present room. The landlord of the Goldener Adler, a saddened man after his negligence in letting her escape, had gone back to Molsbach, and since then it seemed she had been a prisoner for days.

Monica moved on the hard mattress as much as the ropes would let her. Where was Anthony now? Had he managed to get away after her warning, and, if so, was he lurking somewhere outside Waffenfabrik 3 or had he gone to try to convince someone in authority that she and Captain Butler were prisoners and persuade them to make a move for their release? . . . If they ever were to be released. Muller, she remembered with a shudder, had an effective treatment for those who knew too much about his schemes; and how was Anthony, alone, friendless, and wanted for murder in his own country, even to leave Germany? It did not do to think of Anthony. To remember their parting at the Goldener Adler was like a stab of pain. To have found love together, and now to be parted probably for ever, was not a thought on which to dwell.

Outside her room men were working as they had been all day. They were not near, but she could hear the sounds of sawing and hammering and the buzz of talk. It was all part of the sane, normal world in which she no longer had a part, and remembering Stephen's face as he lay on the carpet in that tiny living-room in Oxfordshire, Monica knew that this was indeed the end. She shifted again, and hoped that one of the workmen might chance upon her room.

Unknown to her, the compartment next door was occupied by one of Muller's associates, so that it was impossible for anyone to reach her room unchallenged. And, in Waffenfabrik 3, men were too well trained to go where their duty did not take them.

The machines hummed on. Later the workmen would be leaving the floor Herr Doktor Muller was converting into offices, and the wing would be deserted.

The shifts would change in the machine sheds, but Waffenfabrik 3 would continue its ceaseless labour till scarlet threads of flame brought the shriek of sirens to sound a warning that would be echoed later all over Europe at the outset of a new war. Monica did not know what was to happen to her, but, although they hoped against hope, both Anthony and Butler knew too well.

" We might as well stop wriggling," said Butler at last. " Not only is it undignified, but it gets us nowhere, as the old lady said after a ride on the roundabout. We can't slip these knots, but let's hope I get one chance to spoil Max's face still further before I'm shot as one of the starters of the fire."

" You think Muller really means to do as he said ? " asked Anthony.

" So far as his plot is concerned, that lad says considerably less than he means," answered Butler. " The fire to-night is serious enough, at any rate for us, but this other business that he hinted at must be ten times worse. You can't alter the course of a coming war with one small fire, and if we knew what was going to happen afterwards we should probably be glad to die first."

He grinned suddenly. " Not that we're finished yet, though, and anything may happen before ten o'clock."

" If only Monica wasn't a prisoner too ! " groaned Anthony, and checked himself. If Butler could meet his fate cheerfully, he could do so as well. He shifted as much as the ropes would allow him and sat up straight.

" Do you think we've got much longer ? "

" It's about time for the balloon to go up," answered

Butler, and as if his words had been a signal there was a sound of footsteps in the corridor outside.

The noise of the workmen upstairs had ended long ago, and Anthony guessed that they had gone home. Everything, then, was ready for the next move, and he was surprised when the door opened and the light was switched on to reveal only Muller and Max.

" The time has come to be brave," said Muller, quoting the immemorial formula of French executioners with grim humour, and noting that Anthony glanced from him to Max he laughed suddenly.

" A wise man does not have too many in his confidence. You and Captain Butler are doubtless somewhat stiff after being seated for so long, and Max and I will have no difficulty in dealing with you if the need arises. Indeed, we and two others are the only persons in this factory who expect the fire. Thousands of men outside await it, but here every worker must be an innocent witness to its reality."

" What's the first item on the agenda ? " asked Butler with interest. " Do we get a chance to stretch our legs ? "

" You shall have one immediately," answered Muller. " The fire starts in eleven and a half minutes, and we must not fall behind time or we shall be interrupted by the arrival of the lorries. Max, kindly untie Captain Butler and lead him to where he will be shot after the fire has started."

" And for heaven's sake shoot straight," put in Butler. " I should hate to see you wasting bullets."

Muller had an automatic in his hand, and Max came across the room and cut the ropes. Butler made an effort to rise, bit his lip, and sat down again heavily.

" You will forgive me if I wait a moment. Some of those knots were rather tight."

" You may have three minutes," replied Muller, and as he spoke a telephone bell rang far away. A slight shadow passed across his face.

" Indeed, I should have had to ask you to wait in any case. Max, will you please see who has rung us up at this inconvenient moment."

He tapped his gun as Max hesitated. " I shall be all right here, and if necessary we can always shoot Captain Butler a few minutes earlier than arranged. Kindly answer the telephone and tell them I am engaged."

" And while you are talking, congratulate the man at the other end that it isn't a television set," put in Butler rudely as Max departed. Then, gently massaging his ankles, he looked up at Muller.

" Are you really going to carry this through ? "

" I have every intention of doing so," answered Muller.

" At least," pleaded Anthony, " you will keep Miss Hayward out of it ? "

" A waste of good material, I admit," agreed Muller, " but unfortunately Miss Hayward is already upstairs, and it is too late to change my plans. She is, as I told you, a German workgirl caught in the flames."

He locked the door, and without taking his eyes off Butler walked swiftly across the room. There he produced a key and unlocked the further door, and as he opened it a whiff of petrol came into the room. He returned to his old station, and glanced at his watch.

" In six minutes precisely my chauffeur will light the train that fires the material in the next room. Our friend from Poland will be allowed to play with a box of matches here, but naturally we are not relying on his unaided efforts. Miss Hayward and all evidence as to my intentions will be destroyed in the conflagration."

He paused. "My study, in case you are unaware of the fact, connects this wing with the one beyond the fireproof wall. The workers are all busy at their machines, and after superintending their efforts I shall return to my room and give the first alarm of fire from there. That is why we must act while there are no lorries in the yard, for the discovery must come too late for us, with the means at our disposal, to save anything in this wing. We do not want some busybody to smell smoke or see flames before we are ready, and, strangely enough, a fire may also start in my study at the same time as I make the discovery. The madman, having released Captain Butler—who is shot while escaping—will be caught himself, and with judicious treatment he can no doubt be made to say anything we desire at his trial."

There was something very sinister in Muller's mention of coercion for the unhappy lunatic, and Anthony realised more than ever the hopelessness of what they had tried to do. The pieces all fell into place so neatly, this move that would close the frontiers of Germany and leave her to make her preparations unobserved was so skilfully planned, that the second tragedy Muller had mentioned, which would mean an instant attack on France and England, was also bound to go off without a flaw.

"Miss Hayward knows nothing about this," pleaded Anthony. "Won't you let her go? Won't you——"

Muller had unlocked the door again, and at this moment Max came into the room. Butler had risen to his feet, and with his gun Muller motioned him to sit down again.

" Well ? " he asked.

" You are wanted on the telephone, Herr Doktor," answered Max.

" Impossible," snapped Muller. He frowned. " Didn't I tell you that you were to answer for me? It seems, Max, that you are growing incompetent."

" You are wanted by Berlin," answered Max, and leaning nearer he whispered in Muller's ear. Whether the call was from someone in authority who could not be ignored, or whether it was from one of Muller's own associates, it was impossible to tell. Whatever it was, Muller made up his mind.

" Two minutes will be enough. Max, kindly take over here," he ordered briefly, and they heard his steps ringing in the corridor as he walked away.

" A wonderful invention, the telephone," said Butler thoughtfully.

" You will remain silent," Max instructed.

Butler looked at Anthony. " The gentleman does not like our conversation. I am not enamoured of Dr. Muller, but at least he has good manners."

He turned back to Max. " Wouldn't it make my death more lifelike, so to speak, if you offered me a cigarette ? "

" If you say another word I'll shoot you here and now! " answered Max between his teeth; and, realising that he meant what he said, Butler was silent. Anthony was still unable to move, but once again Butler tried to get up unobtrusively, only to be met by the response of Max's raised automatic.

There were six minutes left, Muller had told them two and a half minutes ago, and now time was being wasted while the Doctor spoke on the telephone. Max was fidgeting and listening anxiously for his return, and as footsteps sounded outside his face brightened. He put his disengaged hand behind him and opened the door, then gave a snarl of disappointment.

It was not Muller who had come into the room, but Muller's chauffeur with the madman from upstairs.

It was obvious, too, that they had been talking to their prisoner, or else that Muller had drugged him in some way. There was a gleam of insanity in his eyes, and he came in before the chauffeur as if he were already dreaming of the glories that would be his and Poland's when he was king. He towered over the other occupants of the room, but Max ignored him and swung round savagely to the chauffeur.

"Fool! Why didn't you wait for orders?"

"We're behind time already, Herr Max," pointed out the chauffeur stolidly.

"Didn't I tell you to wait till you were sent for?" demanded Max.

"I've got to get to my post for the next job," explained the chauffeur.

"A nice mess you've made of things now," snapped Max.

He never relaxed his watchfulness over the occupants of the room, and for a moment Anthony wondered whether an appeal to the madman would be any use. The man was gazing past him with eyes that were fixed on a dream world of his own, and even as Anthony realised that the King of Poland did not see him, Max snapped his fingers and he moved with surprising docility into a corner of the room. It was an exhibition that gave Max confidence.

"I can look after this lot," he grunted. "Leave the fellow here, and take up your post."

"There'll be more room here after I'm shot," pointed out Butler.

This new voice jarred the madman out of his dreams. The chauffeur had already turned to go, and he stopped him with an imperious gesture.

"Where is that man going?" he asked.

Max evidently thought it best to humour him. "He is going, Your Majesty, to see that all is ready so that you can light the fire for Poland," he answered with mock reverence, and with a sudden return to childishness the man nodded.

"Fire," he said happily, almost crooning the words. "Warm, bright Fire. I like it."

They were getting seriously behind time, and Max signalled to the chauffeur to be gone. "Förster, take up your position and be ready to act quickly. Herr Muller is engaged on the telephone, but it may be for the best. When the time comes, take action as arranged."

The chauffeur nodded. "Jawohl, Herr Max," he answered; and as he left the room Anthony caught a glimpse of the passage and saw that Muller was not yet returning.

"Fire. Bright, beautiful Fire," crooned the madman.

There could not be more than a minute or two to go, and Anthony found himself wondering how the work could be carried out to schedule. Muller was at the telephone, Butler was still alive, and only the chauffeur seemed ready to do his part. As if to dash his hopes, Max spoke again.

"Back!" he ordered, and the madman shambled obediently towards his master.

Max turned to Butler. "This makes no difference. If necessary, I shall shoot you in this room."

"There isn't a carpet to spoil, anyway," agreed Butler amiably.

They relapsed into silence, a silence in which Anthony could hear the thumping of his heart and the muttering of the madman by the wall. Max was alone with them, his gaze fixed unwaveringly on Butler, and with a last hope Anthony suddenly raised his voice.

"Your Majesty!" he called, and as the madman looked up with recognition in his eyes Anthony ignored Max and put all his strength into getting his words through to the maimed brain.

"Your Majesty," he said urgently, "don't you remember that I'm your friend? Upstairs I said I would help you, but that man with the gun is a German, and he's made me prisoner."

The madman nodded slowly, and something seemed to be struggling for expression in his mind.

"What's that man doing here?" he asked, and pointed at Anthony. He stepped forward, and the shambling hesitancy had gone from his walk. He was as light as a great cat.

"Herr Max," he went on arrogantly, "why have you tied up one of my subjects?"

"Get back and mind your own blasted business!" snarled Max.

"It is my will that he should be free," replied the madman with dignity; and, as he walked forward to release Anthony, Max acted.

He could not shoot, but his easy ascendancy of the last few days had made him contemptuous of his captive. How was he to know that the excitement and the thought of the fire that was to make him king had brought about a deep change in the muddled mind?

"Back!" ordered Max again.

He hit the madman across the face. "Get back, I say!"

" Dog, would you strike a king ? " blazed the madman, and with a sweep of the arm he sent his assailant spinning across the room as if he had been a fly. Max tripped, his head came down with a stunning crash upon the wainscoting, and the gun fell from his hand and slithered across the wooden floor.

" Untie the knots and help my friend," said the madman to himself happily.

It was all over in an instant. Butler leapt from his chair and dashed across the room, but he was just too late.

" Hands up, or I shall shoot you! " a voice said from the doorway, and Butler stopped in the middle of the floor and raised his hands reluctantly above his head.

" Our good Max seems to have bungled things again," went on Muller pleasantly, and at the caressing accents the madman let go of the knot with which he had been wrestling and cowered away. Anthony stifled a sob of disappointment. If only the telephone call had lasted a minute longer all might have been saved.

" It's a fair cop, as they say," agreed Butler resignedly.

Muller closed the door behind him and looked benevolently at the King of Poland.

" And now," he said, " I think it is time to start our fire."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"I WAS trying to untie my friend," mumbled the madman, and drew a hand across the cheek where Max had hit him.

"On the contrary," answered Muller. "He is not your friend at all."

He spoke soothingly, and hope died away in Anthony's breast. If Max's hold on the madman had been precarious, Muller ruled the man with a fear that would not permit of any argument. His strength as a helper had completely vanished, and one glance at Max lying insensible in the corner, with a trickle of blood running from his temple, showed how formidable that help might have been.

Muller, without ever removing his gaze from Butler, seemed perfectly aware that Anthony was looking at the secretary. He nodded.

"A pity about Max," he remarked, "but he has only himself to blame. Later I will see whether I can do anything for him. At the moment, there are more important things to do."

He spoke to Butler. "You, Captain Butler, will be shot by me here, and I have decided to shoot Mr. Wayne at the same time. There is a breakdown in the nearest machine shed which has reduced the noise and makes it inadvisable to fire a shot sooner than is necessary, for fear of giving the alarm too early, so I shall postpone your end to the last moment. If the shot is unheard, so much the better. If it attracts attention, Förster will start my secondary fire upstairs while I explain that I found you both in here. And, I think, now is the time to begin."

"You want me to light the fire now?" mouthed the madman. He clawed ingratiatingly at Muller's coat; and, realising the cold-bloodedness with which he was assigned afterwards to trial and execution, Anthony felt slightly sick. Once again the man was happily babbling, forgetful of everything that had gone before.

"Will my bright fire burn all the Germans?"

"You can light it now. The door is over there, and you will find matches inside," answered Muller.

"And afterwards I shall have my kingdom," agreed the madman eagerly.

He moved towards the door of the farther room, and Anthony felt a tightness in his throat. He saw Muller, a calculating look in his eyes, raise the muzzle of his automatic until it covered Butler's heart and then wait for the moment when the fire should have caught the pile of inflammable materials next door. He saw that Butler was looking straight into the other's face with a smile upon his lips. It was as he waited for the shot, and steeled himself to meet the next one as bravely, that Anthony heard what the madman was saying as he went towards the door.

"A queen," crooned the madman to himself. "A kingdom, and a beautiful queen with golden hair. A queen with blue eyes, and all the Germans will be killed. . . ."

A queen! Anthony remembered that the man had seen Monica at Nuremberg, and that he had been strongly attracted by her, and realising the meaning of his words and something of what Muller had offered him as a bribe, he raised his voice on an impulse in a shout that brought the madman to a stop.

"Stop!" shouted Anthony, and as he went on his words tumbled over each other in their haste.

"Stop! Did that man show your queen to you? You fool, you will burn her in your own fire!"

"Silence!" rasped Muller in a voice of fury, but still he hesitated to shoot Butler before the time and dared not take his eyes from the poised figure. Anthony saw that the madman had paused and was looking at him dully, and wildly he blundered on.

"I'm your friend, I tell you, and I know her. If you light that fire, she'll burn. Your golden queen will be dead, and that man will be to blame."

"Silence!" shouted Muller again, but the damage had been done. The mad King of Poland turned round.

"Is it true?" he asked, and almost there was a note of pleading in his voice.

"It's a lie," answered Muller steadily. "Go and light that fire!"

The madman nodded. "I'm afraid of you, and I'll do what you tell me," he said, and as he turned away Muller made his first, fatal mistake.

"Your queen will enjoy the warmth," he added drily, and a flicker of mockery came into his eyes.

The madman saw it, and once again took on his fleeting dignity. He took a step forward.

"German and liar!" he snarled menacingly, and Anthony knew that the one thing had happened that could break Muller's influence—the madman knew the truth.

It all happened in an instant. The chair hurled by the lunatic caught Muller on the shoulder as Muller's automatic poured out a stream of bullets into his body, and taking advantage of the confusion Butler dived for Max's gun, that still lay in the corner. The crack of his own shot was an echo of Muller's firing.

Muller tottered. He raised his automatic again and pointed it at Anthony for a moment, while he seemed to be trying by sheer force of will to press the trigger, and then the gun rolled from his nerveless fingers and he staggered across the room. His determination carried him almost to the farther door, and then he fell.

" He—Muller's dead," said Anthony with a sob.

" The other was mad, but there were the makings of a man in him," answered Butler soberly, and coming across he struggled with the knots that bound Anthony to his chair.

" We've got to settle the rest," said Anthony, but once the cords were loosed he found that he could scarcely stand. The blood flowing back into his legs was agony, and he could barely manage to stagger three paces across the room to pick up Muller's automatic and slip in a fresh clip of cartridges from the dead man's pocket.

" What do we do next? "

" We've got to stop the fire," answered Butler grimly.

The freeing of Anthony had taken time, and they had evidently mended the breakdown in the machine shed, for the throb of engines in Waffenfabrik 3 was as strong as ever and there was no rush of men attracted by the shots. The steady hum continued, and they realised that it was accompanied by another sound.

A faint crackling came from the other room, and with an effort Anthony went over to the door.

" We're too late! " he cried, for he was met by a cloud of smoke that drove him back coughing.

Muller's chauffeur had started the fire to schedule, and he had done the work well. Butler leaped past Anthony, only to be beaten back by a runnel of flame that ran across the floor where petrol had been freely sprinkled, and the second door of the burning room, that led out again into the corridor, had been left open so that a strong in-draught fanned the flames towards where they stood.

" We shall have to give the alarm," said Butler.

Anthony took one last look round the room. Max, dead or unconscious, lay in the corner, the madman huddled where he had been standing when he threw the chair at Muller, and Muller himself face downwards on the floor, with a trickle of blood creeping slowly across the boards. He shuddered. Whether dead or alive, there was no time to worry about Max now.

They had failed at the last moment. The fire was blazing, and the other move of which Muller had spoken, the move which was to start the war and leave Germany able to concentrate her troops against the West, was still undiscovered. There were plenty of others to follow Muller and put the plan into execution, and Anthony felt a vast depression. Then, as a blast of hot air came through the door, his mind turned to more immediate things.

" Monica's somewhere upstairs, and I've got to find her," he said urgently. " The alarm will have to wait."

" Laddie, you've given me an idea. I'll come with you," answered Butler; and as Anthony could now move more or less freely, they turned and ran along the corridor.

The stairs went up on their left at the far end, and a figure came blundering down them as they ran. He turned towards them.

" Who are you ? " he asked, and raised his gun. " How did you come here ? Get back . . . ! "

Anthony's automatic spoke before the other could fire, and with a surprised expression on his face he toppled slowly over the banisters and fell into the passage. The chauffeur had been upstairs for some reason, but now that he had come down again he would cause no more trouble.

What that reason was became evident when they reached the hall above, where the workmen had been erecting partitions to make new offices. At the far end was the study where Anthony had heard Max speaking on the telephone, and between it and them was another fire. In the other direction was a row of half-built cubicles, and Anthony now saw for the first time that there were three completely finished at the end of the row, and that they were divided from the spot where the workmen had been by a rough barrier.

"You go that way and I'll flit through the flames," suggested Butler, running round the edge of the rapidly growing fire towards Muller's study; and realising that the finished cubicles were almost the only rooms he had not yet searched, Anthony raced towards them.

The barrier bore a large notice "EINTRITT VERBOTEN," but he was in no mood to obey orders to keep out. He straddled the overturned trestles of which it was composed, came to the first cubicle, and tried the door.

It was locked, and forgetting the gun in his hand Anthony wasted valuable seconds by standing back and bringing the sole of his boot crashing against the lock until the door sprang open to show an empty room. There were already spurts of smoke coming between the floorboards, and the air was hot and stifling, and hurrying to the next door Anthony found it ajar and the room also empty save for a desk and one chair. That left only the last cubicle to visit, and finding it locked Anthony put a couple of shots into the mechanism of the lock and kicked the remains of the door open.

He was now directly above the seat of the fire. The floorboards were warped and blackening, and the room filled with smoke and the reek of burning. For a moment Anthony was driven back, completely blinded, and then, crouching so as to breathe any purer air there might be at the floor level, he advanced again and saw dimly a bound figure on a mattress below the window.

A slim girl dressed in an unfamiliar blue overall, who had a gag in her mouth, and who had not lost consciousness as she lay gazing with terrified eyes at the eddying smoke. Anthony's heart leaped. With some obscure memory telling him that it was safest to skirt the walls in case the floor gave way beneath him, he knotted a handkerchief across his nose and mouth and dashed into the room. A moment's greater heat as he passed over the fire beneath, a struggle with labouring lungs to find air, and then he was kneeling beside Monica.

" I'm here, darling," he called urgently, and wrenched at the gag. He saw the terror die out of her eyes and be succeeded by a shining happiness and confidence, and then he leapt to his feet.

He had got to get out somehow. Again that obscure memory told him that he should shut all windows to prevent the fire spreading, but they needed pure air more than anything, and cursing caution he flung open the window and then knelt down again.

" Anthony! " said Monica, and he put an arm round her shoulders. " Are you all right, darling? "

" We've got to get away," said Anthony, and as Monica began to look less dazed he knew that she would do anything he asked of her.

The mattress on which she had been lying had no sheets or blankets, and there was nothing in the room to make a rope. The window was too high from the ground to jump, and it looked on to the outer wall of the factory that rose to a height of about two feet above the lower sill and was perhaps eight feet away. An easy enough leap in the daylight, Anthony supposed, but in the dark and in their present condition an impossibility. He bent down and loosed the ropes that bound Monica's wrists and ankles, and she gave a little laugh.

" I'm glad you've come, Anthony. Everything will be all right now."

Anthony lifted her to her feet, and found that he had to support her because she could hardly stand. She must have been in agony with the renewed circulation, but she even attempted to take a step forward.

" We shall do it easily," he said with more confidence than he felt. " Can you get as far as the stairs ? "

" I'll manage somehow," said Monica between her teeth.

The floor gave a sudden crack, and a tongue of flame licked its way through. The heat from the blaze below was almost unbearable, and she suppressed a shudder.

" We'll keep to the wall," said Anthony. They took a few steps with the boards bending beneath them like cardboard, and he tightened his grip on Monica, then they were in the corridor and he was beating out the smouldering places on their clothing with his hands.

" The stairs will be all right," he told her reassuringly, and as Monica smiled up at him he blessed her for the way she had borne herself so far, and knew that her spirit would carry her through whatever was to come. They passed the doors of the other two cubicles and came to the central landing where the workmen had left their tools. There he stopped with a cry of dismay.

" I think we're finished," said Monica.

The stairs were half way along the landing, and the fire that Anthony had seen earlier beyond them had spread with far greater rapidity than he expected. Between them and the staircase was a heap of timber, paint pots and general refuse, and it was blazing in a way that rendered it hopeless to try to get through. Of Butler there was no sign at all.

For a moment Anthony stood irresolute. They could go into one of the cubicles that was still untouched by the fire, but there would only be the window with an impossible drop below it and the bare outer wall beyond. Then he had an idea.

The workmen had been painting the ceiling, and straight before them stood two pairs of steps with a stout plank laid across them to serve as a platform for the painters. The outer wall was not far from the building, and the plank was one used in the ordinary way for scaffolding, and should easily bear their weight and bridge the distance.

" Let's try to get on the wall," said Monica, following his gaze. " I can manage this end of the plank."

" We'll do it yet! " said Anthony more hopefully, and going to the near end he wrenched at the plank to dislodge it from its place.

The rest was like a nightmare. The plank was unbelievably heavy, and neither of them was in the best of condition. The smoke was growing thicker and more stifling every minute, and there was a horrible interval when the plank wedged in the doorway of the nearest cubicle so that they could neither move it out nor in. Then Monica threw all her weight on the far end and Anthony pulled hard, and the jamb of the door gave suddenly so that he fell in a heap with the plank on top of him. He got to his feet limping a little, and throwing open the window pushed the end of the plank into the air.

Working like this, it seemed to be heavier than ever. With their united weight they managed to get it out so that it reached the wall, but they were quite unable to raise the far end and lodge it on the coping. It seemed for a dreadful moment that the leverage would wrench the whole thing out of their hands and send it crashing to the ground below; then Anthony shook his head and they hauled it back into the room.

"We can't do it that way," panted Anthony, his brain working feverishly. "We shall have to poke it from the window so that it's standing upright, and then lower the end on to the wall."

They tried again. The plank rose into the air, they gripped it as hard as they could at the near end, and then their muscles gave way and the top came down with a crash on to the coping of the wall. It slithered horribly, while they feared that the whole thing would fall down after all, and then it stopped. Anthony gave a sigh of relief.

"You go first," he said, and as Monica showed signs of mutiny he pulled her to the window.

The alarm had been given inside the factory by now. He could hear shouts on the inner side of the building, but the helpers were divided from them by a wall of flame, so that they did not even know of their existence. He and Monica had to carry out their plan or be burnt alive.

"I'm heavier. I'll weigh down this end while you get across," he shouted above the roar of the flames, and with a quick nod Monica stepped up to the window. Anthony caught her to him and kissed her on the lips, and then she was outside and crawling up the sloping plank until she reached the wall.

The worst was yet to come, for there was now no support for the near end of the plank. Anthony lifted it so that it was jammed in the angle of the window frame and the sill, and with Monica holding grimly on to the upper end he also got out to join her. A foot, two feet, he edged his way, and then the plank suddenly began to slip on the window sill. He was conscious of Monica's white face as he wriggled onwards, and then with a great effort he stretched the last few inches and gripped the wall. Monica pulled on his wrist, and with a struggle he reached safety.

The plank, unsupported, tottered for a moment and then crashed to the ground below.

Anthony clung panting to the top of the wall, and looking round saw that the whole sky was red and that the inside of the building they had left was fast becoming a sea of fire. Sparks settled on Monica's overall and he beat them out, and then he had time to realise that they were very little better off than they had been before.

They dared not drop to the concrete space between the wall and the burning building, for that would mean at the best a broken limb, and at worst the collapse of the building on to them before they could escape. The ground fell away from the outside of the wall, so that the drop on that side was impossibly great, and it looked as if they were fated to stay there until the heat or suffocation made them drop off.

"Where's Captain Butler?" asked Monica, and with a pang Anthony realised that he had forgotten him altogether until this moment. And he, too, must have been cut off from the stairs.

" I don't know," he answered sadly, and paused for a moment. " I hope he's got away, but I'm afraid he didn't have a chance."

He took Monica's hand and they tried to edge along the coping, but in their present exhausted condition it was desperately slow work. The fire was so near that the roar of the flames would drown their voices if they shouted, and the searchlights that usually lit the wall were now concentrated on the seat of the fire, so that their beams passed right over Anthony and Monica and their blinding glare dimmed the red glow of the fire and made everything below them invisible.

" I can't get any farther," said Monica at last, and Anthony put his arm round her shoulders and gripped the wall as a blast of hotter air came towards them. The fire was gaining with terrifying rapidity, and even if they moved now they would be trapped long before they got past the doomed building.

" I ought never to have brought you here," groaned Anthony. " Can you forgive me ? "

" We shouldn't have been together if I hadn't come," answered Monica, and he felt her shoulders shake as she pressed against him.

" I'm not frightened now. It was only while I was alone that I minded, and now we're together nothing seems to matter."

Nothing seemed to matter. Anthony gained courage from her, and as she raised her face he looked down in the fitful red glow to make the most of what seemed their last moments. They clung together while the building grew hotter and a floor collapsed inside with a shower of sparks and a renewed roar of flames, and then Anthony suddenly felt something hard in his coat pocket and cursed himself for a fool.

" We're not done yet. I can call for help! " he shouted above the roar, and pulling Muller's automatic that he had completely forgotten out of his pocket he slipped in a fresh clip and let loose a stream of bullets.

The staccato noise of the shots rose even above the din of the fire. The nearer searchlight swung down in an arc and held them in its light, and Anthony laughed triumphantly.

" They'll find us yet! "

" I wish they'd find Captain Butler too," said Monica.

In defiance of discipline, the sentry outside the wall had long since left his post, but the searchlight at the far end of the wall swung down and they saw a party of soldiers hurrying round the corner. They arrived below Anthony and Monica, and halted.

" If you move an inch we'll shoot! " bellowed their officer.

" We only want to get off this wall," Anthony retorted.

" We've brought a tarpaulin, and you'll have to jump for it," cried a familiar voice from the middle of the group of soldiers. " And, laddie, pray to Heaven that we're good at catching."

" Captain Butler! " cried Monica with a sob, and Anthony felt a sudden thankfulness that made him dizzy and nearly sent him toppling from the wall.

The rest was easy. The tarpaulin was stretched out and Monica jumped first, to land squarely in its middle, and then Anthony followed her, only to find that they were under arrest. Handcuffs were snapped on their wrists, and the officer led the way back to the entrance. There he and his men returned to fight the flames, and his prisoners were left under a small guard in the square.

The throb of the machines was stilled at last. Workmen in overalls, with smoke-blackened faces, were lined up in an improvised chain, passing buckets from hand to hand; while the factory fire brigade had brought up an escape and from it were directing ineffectual jets of water into the flames. Almost as the soldiers came into the square, the fire engine from Molsbach thundered through the gateway and entered into the fight.

The wing in which they had been prisoners, as well as that containing the drawing offices of Waffenfabrik 3, was blazing from top to bottom, and windswept flames had set alight three of the nearest machine sheds. The officer had only left a couple of men under an N.C.O. to act as guard, and Anthony suddenly found Butler speaking in his ear.

" To think we're seeing all this without paying entertainment tax! " he bellowed.

The sergeant looked round. " Quiet! " he barked.

" As soon as this is over I want to have a chat with someone in authority," retorted Butler, and the little party watched the scene before them in awed silence.

Monica leaned against Anthony, and his heart was singing because whatever happened now he knew that she was safe. It would mean imprisonment for him and Captain Butler, he supposed, but surely the German government would let her go. She drew closer as an outer wall of the burning building toppled slowly, as though it would never fall, and then crashed to the ground while the flames leaped up with renewed vigour.

They did not know how long it lasted, but dawn was grey in the East before the fire was at last under control, and the weary chain of workers was allowed to stumble away. The officer came across the yard and spoke to them curtly.

"I've been talking to the captain," he said, "and I'm to hand you over to the police at Molsbach."

"Just what I was going to suggest," replied Butler. "Can I have that word with the authorities that I was mentioning earlier?"

"You'll have all the words you want before they've done with you," retorted the officer grimly.

He was only a subaltern, and his head had been injured at some time during the night, so that he was capless and wore a grimy bandage round his head. He seemed very weary, but he still had work to do.

"You'll be marched down now, and I'll follow to give evidence of your arrest."

He glanced at Monica. "The woman can ride with me."

"I'd rather go with the others," answered Monica.

She was drooping with weariness, smoke-stained and scorched, but she managed to straighten her shoulders and look the young officer in the eyes.

"I can manage whatever my friends have to do."

"You'd better go by car," urged Anthony. "It's a long way."

The young officer drew himself up and saluted, and when he spoke again his voice had changed, so that Monica might have been an honoured guest instead of a prisoner.

"I shall be proud if the Fräulein will accompany me," he said stiffly, and was still young enough to avoid his sergeant's eye.

Monica realised that both her companions wished her to go, and she smiled gratefully. "You are very kind," she answered.

The subaltern turned to his sergeant. "March them off," he ordered curtly, and with a salute the sergeant took his little escort through the gates and down the road that shone grey in the morning light and led to Molsbach. Looking back, Anthony saw that Monica was watching them with anxious eyes.

Behind them, a thick pall of smoke hung over the gutted buildings. Waffenfabrik 3 would not function at anything like its normal speed for a very long time.

Impressed, perhaps, by his officer's courtesy, the sergeant had relaxed his strictness, and Butler grinned at Anthony.

"I shall never be thankful enough that I heard those shots when you were marooned on the wall," he said feelingly. "Now I want to see this Chief of Police."

For a man who had failed in his main objective and was going to almost certain imprisonment, he seemed strangely cheerful. The fire might have been worse than was intended, but the first part of Muller's scheme had gone according to plan, the second happening that was to take England by surprise was still unknown to them, and they had lost all chance of intervening . . . and yet Butler smiled. Anthony looked at him in astonishment.

"What do you want to talk to the police about?" he asked.

Butler tapped his breast pocket. "Laddie, I wasn't admiring the view while you were rescuing Miss Hayward. I was looking for some papers. The officer didn't trouble to search any further after he'd taken away my gun, and in this pocket I've got notes on Muller's past and future plans, and by the time I've shown them to the Chief of Police he's going to be the most surprised man in Germany. And, whether he likes it or not, by the time I've finished with him you and I and Miss Hayward are going to be the honoured guests of the Reich."

They marched on down the hill, and a ray of sunshine lit the gold weather-vane on the tower of the Franziskaner Kirche in Molsbach so that it was a blaze of glory.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

IT was four days later. Four days of hectic telephoning, of interviews at which Butler and Anthony had told and retold their story to questioners who steadily climbed the scale of importance with every arrival, of events in Germany that were hidden from the public but that sorely puzzled the intelligence services of half a dozen nations. Now, taking a rest, they were seated with Monica round the table in the little room in the Goldener Adler where she had been served with a meal on the day of their arrival. Butler pulled out his cigarette case.

" The service here is not all it might be," he admitted, " but when the landlord has left suddenly for an unknown destination, what can one expect? This wine that I unearthed from the cellars, however, is more than passable."

He poured himself another glass and passed on the bottle. His companions, Anthony in a grey suit he had bought in the town and Monica in a local dress in which she somehow contrived to look more attractive than ever, waited for his next words.

They were sitting very close together, and Butler looked at them with approval.

" We've got time to waste, so we might as well spend it in clearing up any doubtful points as to our doings of the last few days."

" They certainly need some clearing," agreed Monica. " How did you manage to rescue us just at the right moment, and what were you doing all the time we thought you had been killed? "

" I was engaged," replied Butler, " in collecting the late and unregretted Muller's plans. And, as you know, if I hadn't managed to find them, they would very likely have come off. We knew that the fire was only a starting-point, and that there was another move to follow, but the simple genius of the whole thing is almost unbelievable."

He paused. " When the madman gave us our chance and we laid out Muller, we still had no idea what was going to happen next. Anthony naturally rushed upstairs to look for you, Miss Hayward, and something that he had told me earlier gave me an idea.

" Anthony had described where Muller's study was, and while Muller was talking to us he had used some very curious words. ' Miss Hayward,' he pleasantly remarked, ' and all evidence as to my intentions will be destroyed in the flames ' ; and if that didn't mean that he'd left his private papers to be burnt in the fire and save him trouble, I didn't know what else it meant. A neat scheme, and Muller always did things efficiently and with the least trouble to himself. Even if they hadn't all been burnt, I knew that nobody but himself would have been allowed in his study after the fire, so I legged it upstairs with Anthony, got through the fire that had started up there, and followed Anthony's directions to find Muller's room. There I found confirmation of my theory. His desk stood full in the draught from the doorway, and it was soaked with petrol so that one match would have reduced it and all its contents to ashes."

Butler stubbed out his cigarette. " I don't mind telling you that the idea of remaining near that fire didn't attract me in the least. The place reeked of petrol and a spark might set light to it at any moment, and, seeing that the desk ran on castors, I took a chance.

" The study had a fireproof door into the other wing, and I betted Muller would have arranged that nobody was on the other side while he started his fire. I opened the door, trundled the desk through into an empty passage, closed the door behind me, and went through the drawers at my leisure. Then, having found even more than I had hoped, I went downstairs and gave myself up as the quickest way of getting to the authorities."

" It seemed hours after Anthony fired his automatic before you came round the outside of the wall," said Monica. " How did you manage to bring the soldiers with you ? "

" They naturally wouldn't let me come alone," pointed out Butler, " and as a matter of fact I told the officer in charge that it must be my accomplices trying to get away. He wanted you alive, as he had visions of a big political trial after the fire, and as soon as the lot of us were taken to the Chief of Police I produced my evidence of Muller's plans. The rest you know."

There was a moment's silence. Butler had been mainly questioned alone, but Anthony had some inkling of the plan that would have been carried out on the day after the fire if Muller's schemes had not been frustrated, and he shivered. It would, as Butler had said, have involved Britain in a far more desperate war than the one they feared was coming; and it seemed to all of them that Stephen Hayward's spirit was very near them at that moment and that his life had not been laid down in vain.

" I—I suppose the plan would really have worked ? " asked Monica at last.

" The whole thing was thought out to the last detail," answered Butler. " First the fire, with a Pole to act as scapegoat, giving an excuse to close the frontiers and mass troops secretly in the West. Then, twenty-four hours later, the final act and the chance of duping Russia and turning her into a junior partner in the war. Even if it had not succeeded in that, Germany would have attacked us at once and caught us practically unawares.

" Have you ever heard of the Poles Alone? It's a rough translation of the name of a Polish patriotic society. We've got a military mission in Russia at the moment; but, unknown to the rest of the world, the Germans are also discussing matters with Stalin, and it looks as if an agreement to partition Poland is going to be put through. At midnight on the day after the fire in Waffenfabrik 3, a member of the Poles Alone was to have shot one of the German delegates as he came out of the Moscow Opera House with his Russian colleagues . . . and that wasn't going to be the end.

" As Muller said, Stalin distrusts a gift, but he doesn't want to lose anything worth having. A Russian delegate was to have been shot at the same time in order to incense the Soviet, and immediately afterwards the Germans would have issued an ultimatum. They would tell Russia that partition didn't satisfy them, that unless the pact was signed immediately German troops would invade Poland, and that they would take the lot.

" Muller considered that Stalin would fall for it. Russia would use the assassination as an excuse to invade Poland first, and when the partition came Germany would be able to occupy her territory with only a few divisions. And Russia would be branded as the aggressor before the whole world. In the meantime, Germany would have advanced through Limburg, and within a week she hoped to be bombing

England from Dutch air bases and to have control of the Channel ports.

" I hold no brief for Hitler. He's a neurotic dreamer, and is at present influenced by von Ribbentrop who intends to waste Germany's strength in Poland. If the plot had succeeded he would have been under the influence of Muller, and England would have been attacked at once instead of being given time to prepare. That's all there is to it; but the Führer can't bear any opposition, and as soon as he had the details of Muller's plot he acted at once."

" What's happened to the man who would have fired the shots in Moscow? " asked Anthony.

" I believe," answered Butler, " that he has been handed over to the tender mercies of the Russian police. Muller had got hold of the fellow, a murderer and a deserter from the Polish army, and had blackmailed him into taking this one chance to save his life. He didn't worry about what was going to happen to him afterwards."

Again Butler paused. " As you know, that danger is over. Nobody can stop the coming war, but at least we're back in the position for which Britain's preparations have been made. Meanwhile, a leading general has committed suicide in Berlin, several influential leaders in Germany have disappeared, and two or three industrial magnates have left for other countries. And we ourselves have won the tolerance, if not the gratitude, of the German Reich. The Friends of Peace will do better without Muller, and will continue their very useful labours.

" And now, if you will excuse me, I will be off to the police station. I want to put through a telephone call to England." He rose to his feet. " Do you want any further details? "

"Why are they letting us go?" asked Anthony. "After all, we must know too much for their comfort."

"Among the papers in Muller's desk," replied Butler, "was a list of all his associates; and instead of handing it over with the rest I hid it in one of the sheds of the factory before I gave myself up. One of the first people sent down to investigate the story happened to be an important name upon the list, and I hinted to him that if we went to trial I should be forced to produce the paper in self-defence. He didn't like it at all; and as several of the other plotters were friends of Hitler they managed to persuade the Führer that we ought to be sent home. They wouldn't let us leave until von Ribbentrop's pact with Russia was settled, but we're flying back to England to-morrow. I've promised my friend that as soon as we're on British soil I'll post him a letter saying where the list is hid."

"There's one other thing that has been puzzling me," said Monica, "and that is why, if there was a fireproof wall between them, the fire spread so quickly to the other wing of the office block and even farther. Wasn't the fireproofing any good?"

Butler strolled across to the door and flung it open to reveal an empty passage. He shut the door again, went to the window from which Monica had looked out a few nights earlier to see the silent watcher, and assured himself that there was no listener in the yard.

"It seemed a pity to waste all Muller's efforts," he answered at last. "I didn't like Waffenfabrik 3 or its productions, so after taking the papers I opened the fireproof door again to make a draught, and put a match to Muller's desk. As I have said, it was soaked with petrol, and it went up like a torch."

He once more walked to the door. " And now, if you can do without me for a little, I will go to the police station."

The door closed behind him, and Anthony and Monica sat in silence.

" I suppose we shall be going back to England now," said Monica at last.

" I suppose we shall," agreed Anthony.

He glanced sideways at his companion, noting the curve of her cheek and the rebellious wave of golden hair that had filled his thoughts for so many days now, and clenched his hands until the nails bit into his palms. She turned a little, so that her eyes looked up into his, and the memory of their kisses in that very inn was like a sharp pain.

For she and Butler would go back to England. They had carried out the last wish of Stephen Hayward, but there still remained the problem of his dead body and the fact that Anthony was wanted for his murder. Time might clear his name, but until then . . .

With an effort Anthony forced his voice to sound cheerful. " I may stay abroad for a little," he answered lightly, and Monica bit her lips with a remorseful cry.

" Is it about—Stephen ? " she asked. " I ought to have remembered."

They had risen to their feet, and now she stood with her head tilted back in a way that reminded Anthony of that first time he had seen her, when Stephen lay dead and she had come to the cottage. Her eyes were full of courage, and there was bravery in every line of her slim figure.

" I should have thought of it," said Monica, and with a swift movement she took Anthony's hand. " Is that why you've been avoiding me ever since the fire?

You ought to have told me. At least, now that I know, we can go through it all together."

Together. It was an idea that tempted Anthony as he had never been tempted before, but he shook his head.

"We can't do it. Could I ask you to hide in little, cheap pensions on the Continent, terrified of the police or of seeing anyone who ever knew us, married to a man who had to conceal his name, and never able to go home again?" he asked her, and very reverently he lifted her hand to kiss the fingers that he held in his.

"Could we bear to watch each other growing more weary of a hunted life, until I gave myself up rather than go on with it? I'll stay abroad alone: but if ever I am able, I shall come back and ask you whether I may take up our talk where we left it the other evening in this inn."

Monica saw that all argument would be useless. "At least, you won't go away without telling me?" she pleaded, and when Anthony agreed she went towards the door.

"I—I wish we could go together, though."

It was almost unbearable not to take her by the shoulders and beg her pardon for the tears that were in her eyes. A part of Anthony's being shouted that he was a fool and that she was right in what she had said, but he shook his head stubbornly.

"It wouldn't do," he answered; and, flinging past the hall porter who had just watched Monica go upstairs, he went into the cobbled roadway and turned towards one of the town gates.

He did not choose the road that led to the blackened ruins of Waffenfabrik 3, for that would have reminded him too much of Monica. Afterwards Anthony had dim memories of marching through villages where the children had just come out of school and were playing some complicated game in the roadway, of cars that rushed past him and smothered him with dust, of tree-lined roads and of a castle perched on a hill that looked like the illustration of some fairy tale.

He, a man wanted for murder in his own country, was fighting to decide what he ought to do. . . . When Monica and Butler got back to England the papers would be shouting that a German-Russian pact had been reached, but it would not be the pact that Muller had planned. Later, when Anthony—if only he had not been suspected of the murder of his friend—should have been in khaki with the battery he had helped to train, it would become apparent that the war was moving along expected lines, that England and France were to be given precious weeks in which to make ready, while Hitler offered peace and sought a way out of his difficulties like a trapped rat. The thirteenth move had failed, but at the moment that thought gave Anthony little comfort. He was thinking only of Monica: and when, late that afternoon, he came back to the Goldener Adler he walked with a free step and erect head, for he had made up his mind.

He would go to England with the others, and meet whatever was to come. If he were convicted it would all be over the sooner, and if he were proved innocent he would at last be able to go to Monica as a free man.

Butler was standing in the doorway of the inn, and as Anthony entered he stood aside.

" Beer," he said hospitably.

Ignoring Anthony's protests, he swept him into the little room, and there he waited until mugs were brought them.

He took a long drink and eyed Anthony keenly over the rim as he did so. " They tell me you've been walking, and Miss Hayward has been sitting all the afternoon in a horrid little room at the back of the hall that used to be the landlord's. Have you two been worrying over the case of Stephen Hayward ? "

" If you know all about it," answered Anthony savagely, " why do you trouble to ask ? "

" I omitted to mention this morning that I found something else of interest among Muller's papers," went on Butler unheeding. " That's partly why I rang up London this morning, but I didn't like to say anything to you until I had their report."

There was something in his tone that calmed Anthony and made him sit down at the table. Butler went on.

" In Muller's desk was a photograph of Stephen Hayward, and a map of Southern England with the route marked from Southampton to your village. On the strength of the two, I asked the authorities here whether I could ring up England, and they let me do so with an interpreter sitting beside me to cut the connection if I said anything that they didn't like. I rang up my department at a number which will be changed immediately afterwards, and they took up the matter with Scotland Yard. That was on the day following the fire."

Butler paused. " The photograph wasn't sufficient evidence of your innocence, but the map gave them an idea. Nobody drives a car with a false number-plate any farther than is necessary, and it was an even bet that the real murderers of Stephen Hayward would ditch the false plate as soon as they'd shown it to your village police sergeant. My department persuaded Scotland Yard to look into the matter straight away."

There was a buzzing in Anthony's ears, and the room seemed to be going round him. He gripped the edge of the table to steady himself.

" What happened ? " he asked eagerly.

" I had their report to-day," answered Butler. " They've dragged every pond and river marked on the map, and in a pond that hadn't been drained for years and might never have been drained again, they found the false plates. It was safe enough for Muller, for in the ordinary way they would certainly not have been found until after you had been hanged, and that was all he wanted. But now, taken with the photograph and the map, it means that you can come back to England as a free man."

" Where's this room where Monica is sitting ? " demanded Anthony.

He leapt to his feet, conscious of a sudden great relief and of an overwhelming desire to kiss away the sadness and to see the smiles coming back into her eyes.

" I want to see her now."

" We're being taken under escort to Munich to-night, and there's a plane chartered to take us home to-morrow morning," remarked Butler.

He followed Anthony into the hall, and shouted after him as he disappeared in search of the landlord's office.

" We ought to be off any minute, too. There's a car coming to fetch us, and what the Victorian novelists would have called a Very Important Personage is waiting for a word with us before we go."

Anthony knocked on the door of the room where Monica was sitting. " Tell the Very Important Personage," he called, with vague memories of an advertisement he had seen, " that I'll be there in fifteen minutes. Explain that I'm just getting engaged."

The door opened and he went inside. He took Monica in his arms and hugged her to him voicelessly, and with one foot kicked the door shut behind him.

It was considerably more than fifteen minutes before he and Monica came out.